

FRENCH
MERCANTILIST DOCTRINES
BEFORE COLBERT

BY
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To

B. D. C.

FOREWORD

This study grew out of a paper prepared for the seminar of Professor Carlton J. H. Hayes in Columbia University during the year 1928-1929, and has been written under his direction. It was made possible in part through the magnificent resources of the Seligman collection of early economic works recently acquired by Columbia. The Bibliothèque Nationale, the Library of Congress, and the libraries of Princeton and Harvard Universities also deserve a word of thanks for the facilities they have so generously extended. Professor Lynn Thorndike very kindly consented to read and criticise the manuscript.

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INTRODUCTION

To define any great movement is always difficult. Of Romanticism, for instance, no thoroughly satisfactory definition has ever been suggested. Yet an understanding of Romanticism can be achieved by a review of its origins and components, and of the men who put it into practice. It would be necessary to examine the reaction against Neo-classicism, the works of Rousseau, the return to medievalism, the back-to-nature movement, the attempt to escape reality, the religious revival, the rise of emotionalism, the vogue of fantasy, and the lives and writings of great figures like Wordsworth, Byron, Hugo and Goethe.

In the same manner, though definition is difficult, an appreciation of mercantilism can be attained through an inquiry into its early stages, its outstanding lines of development, and the works of the great mercantilists. Perhaps the best approach to the subject would be a study of Colbert, whose beliefs and efforts so well exemplified the mercantilist tenets that Colbertism has become a synonym for mercantilism. An investigation of Colbert's policies would, however, quickly reveal that they were in large part merely a continuation of those already inaugurated or advocated by Richelieu.

The great Cardinal, in turn, would be found to have adopted ideas and theories already common in France.

Neither Richelieu nor Colbert were theorists. They were able administrators, the former interested primarily in the field of politics, the latter in that of economics. They both based their economic work on concepts, notions and premises that had become current in France by the early seventeenth century. What these ideas and postulates were and how they came to be accepted in France it is the purpose of this study to inquire.

The theories of mercantilism rather than its practice will be dealt with for two reasons. First, the final general systems of practice were built on groups of earlier theories. Second, any research into the actual workings of mercantilism for even a brief period, after many years of laborious effort, could result in only tentative conclusions. By the most careful examination of the laws and orders of the central government little would be accomplished, for it would be necessary to ascertain for each locality to what extent such legislation was enforced. Then too, a strong argument could be made, that mercantilism always remained theoretical. Colbert at the height of his power was never able to put into effect, and to force upon local officials a tithe of his policies. It is well known, likewise, that the British Colonial System, more honored in the breach than in the observance, remained to the end an incomplete edifice.

The limiting dates of this study (1453-1629) were chosen rather arbitrarily and demand some justification. In France 1453 marks the end of the Hundred Years' War. It was after that prolonged struggle that France emerged from a congeries of feudal states into a position resembling that of a national state. As mer-

cantilism was built of theories of national economy any evidences of it in France before the middle of the fifteenth century were distinctly embryonic. This is not to say that mercantilist ideas do not date far back into history. Many were current in the middle age. It was, for example, a stock argument in favor of founding a university in a medieval town that by so doing local students would spend their money on education at home while foreign students would bring in wealth from other cities. Regulations of mercantilist flavor were also put into practice in Ptolemaic Egypt. If data were available, it might well be found that stone age tribes had usages comparable to mercantilism. It could probably be shown, indeed, that the mercantilist attitude of mind is the normal one for human societies. In modern history it waned only for a brief period in the nineteenth century to be taken up again about 1880 with renewed vigor in a maze of tariff and subsidy legislation. But in the strict sense mercantilism was a system dealing with the economic life of a national state, and hence it could not appear full-fledged in France until that country became a national state.¹ The early mercantilists and in a sense most of them prior to the nineteenth century were not aware of the directly nationalist implications of the policies they advocated. The consciousness of a common nationality on the part of the French people was quickened greatly by the Hundred Years' War and grew steadily during the ensuing centuries. During the same period, and paral-

¹ No effort is made in this study to trace the *origins* of mercantilist idées, nor to ascertain which of the concepts that grew up in France were borrowed from the theory or practice of other countries.

lel to this development there arose a sense of economic solidarity, and a desire to better the condition of the country as an economic unit. This second tendency found its fullest expression in mercantilism. National self-consciousness and mercantilism were then complementary reflections, one political, the other economic, of the rise of national states.

The date 1629 was chosen because the work of Richelieu and Colbert was not to be treated.¹ Richelieu came to power in 1624, but the Assembly of Notables of 1626 was in direct line of descent from earlier meetings such as the Estates General of 1614; and the Code Michaud of 1629 was based in large part on the *cahiers* of 1614. After 1629 mercantilism in France was colored by the interpretation of Richelieu rather than by the labors of earlier assemblies.

¹ The economic ideas and policies of these two figures have been discussed at length and with careful scholarship in such works as F. C. Palm's *The Economic Policies of Richelieu* and Pierre Clément's various books on Colbert.

CHAPTER I

MERCANTILISM IN SCATTERED CONCEPTS 1453-1589

Some time in the decade immediately succeeding the last battle of the Hundred Years' War, there appeared in France a work which, though quaintly medieval in many respects, dealt with a modern problem, the wealth of nations. It bore the title *Le Débat des Hérauts d'Armes de France et d'Angleterre*.¹ In it two heralds, the one French, the other English, discuss the riches of their respective countries. Some of the items listed by the contestants would hardly find their way into a present day statistical survey, fair ladies, for instance, or good hunting, pleasant pastimes, holy relics, numerous ecclesiastics and valiant nobles.

As the French herald builds up his argument, however, some elements in it have a more familiar ring. Sea power attracts his attention and he expatiates upon it at considerable length. That England is more potent upon the sea he admits. But the ships of Britain are used mainly to plunder "poor merchants" in the narrow seas. If he wishes, the king of France can be the

¹ It has been edited by L. Pannier and P. Meyer and published by the *Société des Anciens Textes Français*, (Paris, 1877). The editors place the date of its composition as somewhere between 1453 and 1461.

ruler of the sea since he has "more things and more diverse for this purpose"¹ than his island neighbors. The essentials for sea power according to the French herald are good harbors, deep and safe, ships, large and seaworthy, and merchandise with which the vessels may be laden.

As for harbors France can point with pride to L'Escluse, Dieppe, Harre Fleur, Grant-ville, Saint Maslo, Brest, la Rochelle, Bordeaulx, Bayonne and many another. The ships, it is true, do not exist; yet "the king of France could have them, should it please him, in great numbers and at less cost than"² the English; for he has the three necessities: wood, iron and workers. England has so little wood that the people are actually forced to warm themselves with coal. France is nearer the source of the best iron, in Spain. While with regard to labor there are in France "as good workers for ship building as in any country."³

It is in goods, however, that France has the clearest advantage. The great vineyards of the land can supply vast quantities of wine, while the salt works of Bace and Brouage turn out large amounts of that commodity so necessary for the salting of fish. Should the French monarch, therefore, undertake to build up his merchant marine he would doubtless succeed, and he would gain great riches "because his ships by freight or otherwise would get what the foreigners come to win in this kingdom, which would greatly profit his people."⁴ Further-

¹ *Le Débat, etc.*, p. 27.

² *Ibid.*, p. 28.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 28.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 29.

more, France could ruin English shipping by regulations directed against it. Triumphant the protagonist of the French concludes, "Thus, Sir herald, do not boast of being king of the sea, because the king of France is better provided with the things aforementioned and set down than you are, and should it please him to undertake it he must necessarily surpass you since he has the three things that are necessary for one who wishes to be king of the sea."¹

Not alone in potential sea power does France outstrip England, claims the French herald, but also in actual wealth. France has greater "wealth of people," more ecclesiastics, more nobles, more members of the third estate. For each walled city in England, France has twelve. France has better tapestry makers, and linen weavers. In France people are busy making paper and verdigris, commodities not produced at all across the channel. As for the agricultural population there is no comparison; for France has more men engaged in raising grapes than there are men of any sort in England.²

In agricultural wealth France has such great amounts of grain, wine, nuts, fruits and domestic animals, that all her neighbors come to seek from her the things they lack. Minerals too, France has in abundance; gold and silver, iron, saltpetre and coal are all to be found within her borders. Touching both the Atlantic and Mediterranean, France has all the fish she needs, not to mention those that can be caught in the large and navigable rivers which traverse the whole country. The

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 31.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 42-43.

French climate is likewise superior. "Here," says the herald, "the air is mild and pleasant; luscious and full-flavored fruits grow in abundance; and people live pleasantly."¹

The herald of England whose statements are interspersed among those of his opponent touches on much the same subjects, but in less detail and without the same air of conviction. The argument is concluded by the protagonist of France, who makes a final and irrefutable point. What matters it, he says, if England does have some elements of wealth; France has just causes for a quarrel with her. In such a contest the superiority of France would be manifest and the French king and his followers would become masters of all the riches of England. In fact, he advises the English herald to cease vaunting the wealth of his native land lest he thus invite an armed visit from the ruler of France.²

Though formed on medieval models, and embroidered with medieval fancy, this *Débat* is none the less an inquiry into two problems which have occupied France and the world since the fifteenth century. In what does a nation's wealth consist? How can one nation acquire the wealth possessed by another? In answer to the first query the French herald lists among other items, population, mineral and agricultural resources, and geographical situation. He considers also the increase in wealth which a well-developed merchant marine might bring. In answer to the second, he suggests conquest. Another country has wealth—take it

¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 44-48.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 49-50.

by force of arms. During the next century and a half in France there was built up a new point of view, drawing its component parts from many sources, progressing from scattered and fragmentary ideas to grand though ununified systems of economic philosophy. Like the herald of France, the later thinkers sought to win for their country the wealth of other nations. Unlike him they eschewed methods of simple directness and endeavored to achieve the same object by a congeries of indirect approaches. Such was the rise of mercantilist theory in France.

In the period stretching from the close of the Hundred Years' War to the close of the wars of religion in France, mercantilist ideas found expression chiefly in the laws¹ of the country and in the documents emanating from the Estates General which met at irregular intervals. As the mercantilism of this era was in a certain sense embryonic and of diverse sorts it can best be treated by a consideration of the problems in connection with which it appeared. Any attempt, in France, to correlate mercantilist thought into a system until the close of the sixteenth century would be unhistorical.

In general the topics in which early mercantilism tended to center can be grouped under three heads:

¹ Often the preamble to a law, edict, ordinance, or the like set forth at length the considerations which made it seem necessary. It is largely in these introductory passages that economic theory is to be sought. Of course the sentiments expressed in the formalized preamble of a law must be taken with several grains of salt. The king often claimed that the good of the people was his sole object when in fact he was pursuing a narrowly selfish policy.

bullionism, which includes the theories as to the value of gold and silver, the traffic in precious metals, and luxury as tending to dissipate bullion; internal development, covering such subjects as self-sufficiency, agriculture, industry, mines, employment of the poor and restrictions on foreign residents; foreign commerce, dealing with exports, imports, shipping and foreign markets.¹

Bullionism

Value of Gold and Silver

From early times gold and silver have been esteemed highly by almost all peoples. In the middle ages the rarity of the two metals led not only to the prolonged efforts of the alchemists to achieve transmutation of the baser metals, but also to hoarding on the part of merchants and rulers. The idea of money as the "sinews of war" or the "nerves of a state" became current in Italy as early as the fourteenth century. In France sometime not long after the beginning of the fifteenth century this esteem for bullion took on a new flavor. Gradually it came to be thought that it was desirable for the nation to gather within its boundaries and to retain there as much of the precious metals as was possible. The purpose of such accumulation was usually stated in rather general terms, as "to benefit the people," "to improve the common welfare" or "to prevent ruin and poverty."

Royal letters enlarging the privileges of the fairs of Lyons, in 1462, stated as their object the desire to

¹ Instead of treating all the mercantilist ideas together chronologically, separate topics will be carried down from 1450 to 1589.

counteract the fairs of Geneva whither each year the greater part of the gold and silver of France was taken "to the great prejudice of the public welfare." Such export was very deleterious to "the public welfare of the kingdom." Steps were made necessary since some people sought "their individual profit" and neglected "the public good."¹ Again in an edict on the exploitation of mines, dating from 1471, the preamble declared that to develop French mines in the same way as those of England, Hungary, Germany, Bohemia and Poland would greatly profit the country. Because the mineral resources of France were not being worked, the edict set forth, "We² and our subjects suffer greatly and gold and silver pour out of our kingdom . . . daily without coming back to it, from which might ensue its total ruin and destruction."³

The *cahier*⁴ of the three estates of the Estates General of 1484 likewise took up the question of the value of the precious metals and the harm resulting to the nation from their loss.

"Money [stated the *cahier*] is in the body politic what blood is in the human body; it is, then, necessary to examine as to what bleedings and what purgings the

¹ Isambert, *Recueil général des anciennes lois françaises depuis l'an 420 jusqu'à la révolution de 1789*, (Paris, 1825, etc.), Vol. X, p. 452.

² The edicts are of course in the form of statements by the king.

³ Isambert, Vol. X, p. 623.

⁴ The *cahier* of the French Estates General was a statement of grievances and suggestions as to salutary reforms. *Cahiers* were drawn up by the district representatives of each estate; from these was made the general *cahier* of the estate. Occasionally, as in 1484, the three estates would present a joint *cahier*.

monarchy has undergone in the last century. The first was in the times of the popes Alexander and Martin, who in the space of four years took out of this kingdom sums so considerable that they were reckoned at more than two millions of gold.”¹

Concordats were, according to the *cahier*, made to stop this drain. But even while the country was ravaged by the English, it still went on. So well did Charles VII administer the kingdom, however, that “money no longer went out of the country” and “in a short while the body politic began to breathe and become convalescent.”² But Charles died too soon, and “Louis XI, seduced by the wiles of Cardinal Jouffroi, revoked the pragmatic sanction and handed the kingdom over to the pope to be used at will.” From this great harm resulted for France and “prodigious sums” were taken out of the realm. Each vacancy in every one of the one hundred and one bishoprics of France cost the land six thousand ducats. Each vacancy in every one of the three thousand abbeys and priories caused at least five hundred ducats to be sent to Rome.³ When to these were added the amounts from indulgences, tithes, dispensations and the like the total ran into “immense sums.” Then too there were the papal legates, who by their exactions in the preceding reign “gave this poor realm marvelous purgings and were seen to lead away

¹ These are not the exact words of the *cahier*, but rather Mayer's summary of them. Mayer is, however, fairly accurate. Mayer, *Des États Généraux, et autres Assemblées Nationales* (La Haye, 1789), Vol. XI, p. 60.

² *Ibid.*, Vol. X, p. 61.

³ *Ibid.*, Vol. X, p. 62.

with them mules laden with gold and silver."¹ The tone of these animadversions by the three estates was distinctly anti-clerical and was in line with the long defence by the Estates General of the liberties of the Gallican Church. Yet there was in them too, a strong bullionist note of appreciation of the importance of gold and silver and the desirability of keeping large quantities of the precious metals in the realm. This latter note was strengthened by a passage in which the estates deplored the foreign policy of Louis XI, saying that his search for foreign friendships and alliances caused considerable sums of money to be sent out of France to England, Germany, Portugal and Scotland.²

In the development of bullionism, as with other mercantilist ideas, there was a partial lapse during the latter part of the reign of Charles VIII and during that of Louis XII. The explanation is not far to seek. Engaged in prolonged Italian wars, and dazzled by the new ways of life and thought brought back from the South, the French had little inclination to turn their minds to the more drab realities of commerce and finance. For this reason significant examples of nascent mercantilism are rare in the decades following 1484. During the reign of Francis I, however, the evolution of economic concepts got under way once more. An ordinance of 1540, for instance, spoke of the export of bullion as tending toward "the impoverishment of the realm."³ But it was in the Estates General under the later Valois that the value of gold and silver was

¹ *Ibid.*, Vol. X, p. 62.

² *Ibid.*, Vol. X, p. 63.

³ Isambert, Vol. XII, p. 701.

especially emphasized. In the *cahier* of the clergy in the Estates of 1560 money was spoken of as the "nerve of all affairs" and the wealth of the king depicted as resting upon the general wealth of his subjects.¹ In the same assembly almost anything which tended to remove gold and silver from the realm was treated as an unmitigated evil.²

By 1576 there was a partially tacit assumption that one of the major criteria by which the effect of any step on the public could be judged, was whether it tended to increase or decrease the amount of bullion in the country. In the Estates General of that year this standard of judgment was applied to such diverse problems as the regulation of the goldbeaters of Paris,³ the decoration of furniture,⁴ the treatment of foreigners,⁵ the organization of industry and commerce,⁶ and the reduction of luxury.⁷ After the middle of the sixteenth century the value of a large supply of bullion was an almost axiomatic basis of argument in France. Sometimes explicit, more often not, it colored French economic thought for generations.

Prohibition of the Export of Bullion

The simplest way by which a desire to keep the precious metals within a country can express itself is by

¹ Mayer, Vol. XI, p. 429.

² *Ibid.*, Vol. XI, pp. 463, 466-467.

Lalourcé and Duval, *Recueil des cahiers généraux des trois ordres aux États Généraux*, (Paris, 1789), Vol. I, p. 144.

³ *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 340.

⁴ *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 81.

⁵ *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 172.

⁶ *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 388.

⁷ *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 348.

a prohibition of their export. Edicts of that tenor date back into the middle age in France, but the earlier ones usually had some definite object in view. Either the king wished to assure himself of having money on hand for a given project; or to take punitive measures against the church; or to prevent some political enemy from increasing his supply of ready cash. In the decree condemning Jacques Cœur (1453) the charges against him included that of financial crimes and irregularities. Of these one of the most important was that he had sent money out of the kingdom. But this offense was greatly aggravated, apparently, by the fact that he had made these payments to "the Saracens, enemies of the Christian faith" and of the king.¹ In 1478 royal letters forbade the sending of money to Rome.² A declaration of 1506, however, was more purely bullionist. It prohibited the export of all money, gold or silver, save for certain specified pieces of inferior quality.³ Regulations of the same sort or even more inclusive were issued in 1540, 1548, and 1574.⁴ At the meeting of the Estates General in 1576 the *cahier* of the nobles urged that all persons be forbidden to send from the country gold and silver.⁵ Legislation to that effect was re-issued from time to time, but it never became a prime tenet of the mercantilists to demand it. Probably there were two reasons for this: first, laws of that nature were

¹ Isambert, Vol. IX, p. 254.

² *Ibid.*, Vol. X, p. 795.

³ *Ibid.*, Vol. XI, p. 464.

Ordonnances des rois de France, etc., (Paris, 1773-1849), Vol. XXI, p. 341.

⁴ Isambert, Vol. XIII, p. 695; Vol. XIII, p. 57; Vol. XIV, p. 268.

⁵ *Recueil des Cahiers, etc.*, Vol. II, p. 170.

almost impossible to enforce; second, if enforced they would have tended seriously to interfere with foreign trade.

The Question of Luxury

More indirectly than in the attempt to ban the export of precious metals, but none the less clearly, bullionism played a part in the effort to repress luxury in France.¹ As trade increased in the later middle age and early modern times, a great diversity of costly goods was placed at the disposal of those who had the money to buy. Rich foods, gorgeous fabrics, jewels of great price came into use. Excessive expenditures were made on houses, retinues, furniture, and dowries. For a number of reasons the kings of France, though often the chief offenders, sought to reduce such extravagance. In the first place, it seemed a sin against religion for people to forget all humility and strut in ornate splendor. Second, as luxury depended on money, and money was more and more coming into the hands of the middle class it seemed that some steps were necessary to keep each class in its proper position and to prevent the bourgeois from surpassing the noble in magnificence. Third, many a noble or landed aristocrat, left to himself, tended to dissipate his patrimony and squander his substance in vain display. Fourth, many of the luxury articles such as cloth of gold, cloth of silver, gilded furniture and

¹ By treating the question of luxury here it is not intended to imply that the problem was primarily mercantilist. The dislike of luxury and the effort to repress it by sumptuary legislation dated back into the middle age and were based on medieval theory. In the sixteenth century in France, however, the opposition to luxury was reënforced by mercantilist considerations.

the like required precious metals in their composition, and these tended to be lost as the object wore out. Fifth, many of the luxuries were imported from foreign countries; to purchase them it was often necessary to send out gold and silver coin. While the motives behind the legislation were inextricably intermingled, it is only the last two that were connected with bullionism. The desire to conserve the precious metals by reducing extravagance in dress and manner of life gave rise to a number of remedies. The importation of luxury articles was forbidden; their use was banned; an effort was made to produce them in France. Clearly enough these measures are not all compatible. But that seemed to make little difference. Henry IV, for instance, prohibited the use of cloth of gold and of silver in June 1601.¹ In July 1603 the same ruler granted extensive privileges to certain individuals in Paris to enable them successfully to manufacture cloth of gold, cloth of silver, and silk.²

The restrictions on importation and the attempt to establish industries fall respectively under the general headings of commerce and internal development, but the efforts to reduce the use of luxury articles can be treated under the head of one of the motives behind them,—bullionism.

In 1485 a royal edict forbade all persons save nobles “living as nobles” to wear cloth of gold, cloth of silver or silk. The motives for this legislation appear to have been confused as the statement in the law read, “The public welfare of our kingdom is seriously damaged by

¹ Isambert, Vol. XV, p. 253.

² *Ibid.*, Vol. XV, pp. 283 ff.

the great expenditures and outlay that a number in our kingdom make on clothes that are too ostentatious and too sumptuous, and unsuitable to their estates . . . and also . . . such abuses are displeasing to God, our Creator.”¹ An edict of 1532 of similar tenor greatly enlarged the list of illegal luxuries. To the banned fabrics were added, gold chains of more than a given value, jewels and rings worth more than thirty écus, over-large dowries for daughters, and an excess of horses or servants. A new motive appeared also. Excessive expenditures by the wives and families of bourgeois, would, it was feared, lead to financial abuses and malversations on the part of the merchants and financiers.²

In 1543 luxury fabrics were again forbidden, because of the “excessive and superfluous expenditures” made on them by a number of people. “By means of which,” said the edict, “great sums of money are drawn from this our kingdom by foreigners who afterwards aid and support our enemies.” Cloth of gold, cloth of silver, embroideries, fringes, velvets, and the like were therefore to be worn by no one, save only members of the royal family. This measure, it was felt, would prevent the French from consuming their wealth in useless expenses, and the foreigners from “growing fat and rich.”³

Four years later these regulations were confirmed by letters patent.⁴ After an interval of two more years another edict was issued (1549) condemning excessive

¹ *Ibid.*, Vol. XI, p. 155.

² *Ibid.*, Vol. XII, pp. 361 ff.

³ *Ibid.*, Vol. XII, pp. 834-835.

⁴ *Ibid.*, Vol. XIII, p. 18.

and useless luxury and reiterating the prohibition of luxury fabrics. Certain modifications were, however, introduced. Wives of members of the judiciary were to be permitted to wear sleeves and trimmings of silk. But none except nobles were to wear "silk on silk," that is to say, one silk garment over another of the same material.¹ The bullionist motivation was more apparent in a law of 1554 which spoke of the "great sums of money" which were being taken out of the kingdom to buy "cloths of gold, silver, velvet, and other kinds of silks from foreign nations" which were often hostile to France.²

The law of 1549 was mentioned by a spokesman for the third estate in the Estates General of 1560. He urged that the provisions against "silk on silk" be enforced, and roundly reproached the clergy and the judges for their undue luxury.³ Furthermore the third estate took up the question of luxury in its *cahier*. "Among the other vices," stated this document, "which intercourse with foreign nations has brought into this kingdom, one of the greatest is the pomp and superfluity of dress both of men and women, both in their persons and in the equipment of their houses." In fact, declared the *cahier*, "the greater part of the evils of France proceed from this source, beside the quantity of money which goes out of the kingdom for perfumes, scented gloves, embroideries and the like, of which the cost is great and the enjoyment short." For these rea-

¹ *Ibid.*, Vol. XIII, pp. 101-104.

² *Ibid.*, Vol. XIII, p. 374.

³ Lalourcé and Duval, *Recueil de pi  ces originales et authentiques concernant la tenue des  tats G n eraux* (Paris, 1789), Vol. I, pp. 270, 272, 273.

sons the third estate urged the king to forbid in France the traffic in perfumes, trimmings, embroideries and all other luxuries coming from Italy or elsewhere. They likewise suggested that gilding on iron or wood, and all sorts of goldsmith or enamel work be prohibited.¹ As a matter of fact the royal ordinance drawn up on the basis of the recommendations of the Estates General and issued in 1560 did forbid gilding on lead, iron and wood and the use of perfumes "brought from foreign lands";² while decrees of 1561, 1563, and 1565 reinforced the legislation against luxury in dress.³

But it was not the third estate alone that declared against luxury in the Estates of 1560. The nobles, in order that the nobility might be "maintained in its dignity," asked that none but members of their class should be allowed to wear velvet and various forms of gold embroidery and ornament; while a district *cahier* of the nobles requested that the luxury of all estates but especially of the third be reduced, since the people were ruining themselves and since the gold and silver of the kingdom were "exported to foreign nations for the purchase of raw silk, silks, gold and silver thread, fringes, embroideries" and similar commodities.⁴ The clergy likewise urged that superfluity in dress be cut

¹ Mayer, Vol. XI, pp. 466, 467, 471, 472.

Recueil des Cahiers, etc. Vol. I, pp. 429, 440, 443, 444.

² Isambert, Vol. XIV, p. 97.

³ *Ibid.*, Vol. XIV, pp. 108, 159, 178.

⁴ Mayer, Vol. XI, p. 211.

Recueil des Cahiers, etc. Vol. I, p. 72.

⁵ *Ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 144. This was the *cahier* of the nobles of Troyes, Chaumont, Vitry, Meaux, Provins, Sézanne, and Sens in the government of Champagne and Brie.

down, and that the distinction in costume between the nobles and the third estate be preserved carefully.¹

The effort to preserve the bullion of the country in a form in which it would not be worn out led to the issuance in 1571 of a new regulation. Goldsmiths were not to make any object of gold or silver, greater in weight than a *marc* and a half. Nor were tailors to use gold and silver on the clothes they made.² Clothes and luxury were restricted again by new edicts in 1573, 1576, and 1577.³ In the Estates General of 1576 there was a fairly concerted attack on luxury. The clergy urged the enforcement of the laws on dress, asked for new regulations on the use of gilding, and suggested that if new taxes must be levied they be laid on "the things that corrupt the life" of the French, table delicacies, feminine ornaments, cloth of gold and silver, silks, etc.⁴ The nobles advocated that all save princes and princesses should be forbidden to wear precious stones, pearls, bracelets, chains and the like, except that nobles were to be allowed to use rings hung from the neck or worn on the hand. Only members of the royal family, moreover, were to wear cloth of gold or cloth of silver in any form.⁵

The third estate went even further. For their *cahier* asked that, "To bring the poor people back to their ancient humility . . . these laboring folk, cultivators of the vine and other village people" should "not wear

¹ *Ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 52.

² Isambert, Vol. XIV, p. 237.

³ *Ibid.*, Vol. XIV, pp. 260, 305, 327.

⁴ *Recueil des Cahiers, etc.* Vol. II, pp. 81, 82, 108.

⁵ *Ibid.*, Vol. II, pp. 167, 168.

any colored clothes, but only grey undyed.”¹ The situation seemed dire to these members of the bourgeoisie, “the simple gentlemen wishing to be clothed and to live like a king or a prince; the magistrate, financier and merchant to be dressed and to live like the greatest lords; and the workman to do as the rich merchant does; the servant to be dressed and attended like the master; a state of affairs which causes the ruin and destruction of an infinite number of people and brings it about that many men become robbers and thieves, the women courtesans to support this state.” Excessive expenses should be reduced. Each person should live and dress as befitted his station in life. If it was possible it should be brought to pass that people should “not be clothed save in wool or silk manufactured in France, a thing which would save a deal of money to the kingdom.”² Furthermore the trade of the gold-beaters should be abolished since in Paris alone they used up vast quantities of gold and silver. The old laws on feasts and banquets should be enforced. Those who sought to evade the laws against silk by wearing cloth made only partly of silk should be prevented from so doing, since such fabrics were not serviceable and cost just as much as pure silk.³ Rather pointedly the third estate suggested that the fashion of simplicity be set by the great nobles inasmuch as all classes followed the styles set by them.⁴

In almost the same words as those used by the third

¹ *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 349.

² *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 348.

³ *Ibid.*, Vol. II, pp. 340, 350.

⁴ *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 351. The court of Henry III was noted for its extravagance.

estate of 1576, a district *cahier* of the third estate in the Estates General of 1588 scored abuses and urged remedies.¹ The clergy and the third estate in that year reiterated their desire to see enforced the regulations on foreign goods, fabrics of silk, gold and silver, and excessive banquets.² The nobles begged the king to "repress the insupportable luxury, . . . and establish the old time modesty and simplicity of the French" and to renew the sumptuary laws on clothes so that one might "distinguish the quality of all persons."³

During the period from 1453 to 1589, then, theories as to the necessity of having large quantities of bullion in France were expressed in a variety of ways. Sometimes there were direct statements made as to the value and importance of the precious metals. Numerous attempts were made to put into effect the most direct method of conserving gold and silver, the prohibition of their export. There cropped up continually a desire to do away with luxury on grounds social and religious as well as economic. In all these fields the bullionist motivation tended to become stronger and more consistent as the years went by, though this is not apparent at first glance since in many cases bullionism had grown so strong as to have become a tacit assumption lying behind actions and ideas.

¹ *Recueil de Pièces, etc.* Vol. IX, pp. 246 ff. Whole passages are identical in the two *cahiers*. The district was the government of Champagne, Brie and Sens.

² *Recueil des Cahiers, etc.* Vol. III, pp. 77, 78, 242.

³ *Ibid.*, Vol. III, p. 123.

Internal Development

Self-Sufficiency

“Indeed this most prosperous kingdom has a great number of provinces which because of the beauty of the countryside, of the fertility of the soil, of the health-giving air, easily surpass all the countries of earth. What region is watered and enriched by rivers purer or in any way superior? Are the other shores of the two seas better adapted to navigation? Where are there forests more suitable for the chase, for building materials, and for all uses? Who has as many fertile pastures, as many fish of all kinds, as many flocks both great and small? Whose wines, whose grains can compare to those of this country? To be brief, can you find a land better provided with all the riches necessary for man’s wants. . . . As to the shining virtues of its inhabitants, I feel that I can say that in their solidarity [*unions de cœur*], their noble rectitude, their courtesy their urbanity, they surpass the rest of the nations.”¹

So spoke the Chancellor of France in the address which opened the Estates General of 1484. It is scarce to be doubted that a number of similar eulogies on the wealth of France and the excellent qualities of the French could be culled from earlier sources. The herald of France, for instance, indulges in similar remarks. From the point of view of mercantilist theory, however, the interesting fact is not that there was early an appreciation of the blessings which France had received, but that gradually during the century and a half after

¹ *Journal des États Généraux . . . à Tours en 1484*, (Paris, 1835), pp. 39, 41.

1453 these pæans in praise of the country, its resources and its inhabitants took on a new tinge and gave rise to new implications.

A royal edict of the date of 1557, after a long discussion of theories of commerce, made this pronouncement :

“God by His holy grace has put in our hands a kingdom composed of different lands and provinces each one of which, in its own setting, is as fertile and as abundantly provided with divers commodities as any other in Christendom, and what is lacking in one is found in another to such an extent that the inhabitants and dwellers in it have no need to seek the aid and assistance of neighbors or of foreigners for the necessities, nor for the other things made essential by common usage.”¹

The idea was obviously becoming current that France was so well endowed that she was economically independent of all other lands. The theory that France was almost entirely self-sufficient was reiterated in an edict of 1572. In the preamble the king was depicted as desiring to provide that his subjects “may profit and grow rich from the comfort, fertility and plenty with which it has pleased God to endow and bless our kingdom . . . there being need to seek or go abroad for only a very few things that are necessary for man’s use, but on the contrary being able to aid conveniently these foreigners with all sorts of provisions, goods, and merchandise which are produced in quantity in this our kingdom.”² France could not only get along with-

¹ Isambert, Vol. XIII, p. 507.

² *Ibid.*, Vol. XIV, p. 241.

out foreigners but she could supply them with her surplus products.

At the Assembly of Notables in 1583 the same idea was repeated. The advice drawn up for the king read in part:

“It will in a way be rendering thanks to God to make good use of the blessings which He has bestowed to such an extent upon this kingdom that it seems as if He had intended it to have authority and rule over all others, having so well established it and provided it with everything necessary for the life of man in such plenty that it can do without all its neighbors and none of them can do without it.”¹

This concept of France self-sufficient because of her natural wealth, supplying neighbors from her bounty and thereby gaining riches led directly to a desire to increase both the self-sufficiency and the surplus. To effect these ends it seemed obvious that the productivity of the country must be increased in every possible way.

Industry, Agriculture, Mines

That industry was one of the chief means by which a country could attain productivity and wealth was clear to some, at least, by the middle of the sixteenth century. Royal letters of 1554 which confirmed the statutes of the workers in cloth of gold, cloth of silver and silk in the city of Lyons, spoke of the establishment of such manufactures as these as the only way to prevent the

¹ *Mayer*, Vol. XIV, p. 233.

export of money.¹ In 1572 an edict evinced a desire on the part of the king that the French, "devote themselves to the manufacture and working up of wool, flax, hemp, and tow which are produced abundantly in this kingdom . . . and from them make and get the profit that the foreigners [now] make, who come to buy them, generally at a low price, export them, have them worked up and then bring back the woolens and linens to sell at high prices."²

The *cahier* of the third estate of 1576 contained a similar sentiment:

"There is no better method of feeding and supporting many people in this kingdom . . . and . . . of drawing from abroad money and other things than to employ them [the people] as is necessary, in working up³ and manufacturing the materials and goods within the kingdom, a thing which some neighboring nations have learned well to do since they bring [hither] from their country goods all manufactured which supply the means for a great number of men to live in such a country and to draw moreover great amounts of money from this kingdom."⁴

The Assembly of Notables of 1583 committed itself to an even stronger statement:

"Of all the propositions which have been made to this assembly, after those which have to do with the

¹ Isambert, Vol. XIII, p. 374.

² *Ibid.*, Vol. XIV, p. 242.

³ The text reads *ouvrir* but the sense makes the emendation *ouvrir* certain.

⁴ *Recueil des Cahiers etc.* Vol. II, p. 338. These very words are repeated in the *cahier* of the third estate of the government of Champagne, Brie, and Sens for the Estates General of 1588.

honor of God, there is none which approaches the utility and necessity of this one: to reestablish manufacturing in France, which will be found to be the unique and certain means not only of enriching the kingdom, in which respect it cannot fail, but also of purging it of the infinite vices and crimes into which excessive idleness and poverty induce and drive even the most guileless.”¹

Partly from the motives indicated in these excerpts, the Valois kings were very active in aiding and supporting industry of all sorts.² To treat of their efforts in this direction is not here possible. A few samples of the theory behind the royal activity must suffice. Letters patent of 1551 granted to one Theses Mutio, an Italian, the monopoly of the manufacture of glass in the Venetian style for ten years. The reasons for giving this privilege were two. First, the expense of establishing such an industry was too great to be borne by an individual without special aid. Second, from such an establishment there was bound to result great good for the country as a whole.³ Again in the matter of the statutes of the luxury textile artificers of Lyons, letters from Henry II confirmed their “privileges, liberties, franchises, immunities and exemptions” because of the progress that they had already made by royal aid. Into the city had come great numbers of masters and journeymen from Italy and elsewhere. Production had so

¹ Mayer, Vol. XIV, p. 232.

² This phase of French sixteenth century history is treated in some detail and in masterly fashion in Boissonnade, *Le socialisme d'état etc.* (Paris, 1927).

³ Isambert, Vol. XIII, pp. 184-185.

increased "that a good part of these cloths which used to be imported from Genoa and Italy" was being "made in the city and suburbs of Lyons." No longer did the French have to buy foreign fabrics. Thus their money remained in the kingdom. Further, many poor persons, girls and children of Lyons, were enabled to busy themselves in these trades and their subsidiaries and easily earned a living without falling into "idleness and beggary."¹ That the policy of aiding industry was not merely royal is indicated by the fact that the Assembly of Notables of 1583 urged the king to reduce the taxes on home manufactured cloth urging that any immediate loss in revenue would be more than compensated by the increase in production.²

It was not industry alone that was regarded as a source of wealth and as worthy of encouragement. Agriculture, and mines, received also their share of attention. As early as 1551 a royal declaration gave to a certain Antoine Carras broad privileges including immunity from all taxes to enable him better to raise mulberry trees (on which silk worms are fed). This was done in consideration of the great benefit sure to accrue to the country from the introduction of silk culture.³ In the Estates General of 1560 a district *cahier* of the nobles urged that stud farms be set up in France so that the country would have a supply of horses without being dependent on foreign lands from which they could be

¹ *Ibid.*, Vol. XIII, p. 374.

² Mayer, Vol. XIV, pp. 234-235.

³ Isambert, Vol. XIII, pp. 208-209. The connection with the questions of industry and luxury is obvious.

obtained only "at great expense."¹ The *cahier* of the third estate in 1576 gave thanks to God that their country was "more fertile in grains and wines than any other," and seemed to feel that these resources were important in attracting money from abroad.²

The interest in mines is of even earlier date. In 1471 an edict, granting special privileges to those who would undertake to exploit the mineral wealth of the kingdom, explained that while France had great resources including mines of gold, silver, copper, lead, and tin, there was no proper work being done in them. This, it seemed, injured the kingdom by leading to the export of precious metals, whereas with suitable exploitation of the mines the stock of bullion in the country would increase.³ Under Francis I a similar edict (1520) on the opening up of mines declared as its object "to prevent all foreigners from having any longer so great an opportunity for selling to our subjects their mineral products and commodities at such excessively high prices as they are and have been wont to do."⁴

Laws of like tenor were fairly frequent in the sixteenth century, although towards the end of that period there seems to have been less confidence in the possibility of doing much with the French mineral resources. A royal declaration of 1552 was still couched in an optimistic vein. Privileges were granted to a Sieur de Rober-

¹ *Recueil des Cahiers etc.* Vol. I, p. 139. The nobles were especially interested in having enough mounts for wartime emergencies.

² *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 338.

³ Isambert, Vol. XI, pp. 623-624. France did have some deposits of gold and silver, but so scanty as to be negligible.

⁴ *Ibid.*, Vol. XII, 179 ff.

val to enable him to discover and develop mines. It was hoped thus "to bring to this our kingdom an incredible profit and to keep foreigners, to the great prejudice of our subjects, by means of metals, minerals, semi-minerals and other earth-born materials, from drawing away from our subjects a large part of their wealth." Foreigners were no longer to profit by the sale of products that could be found in France. With the French mines once being worked properly "the money and goods of this our kingdom which are infinite will stay here, and our subjects will therefore remain rich and opulent without these foreigners having the opportunity to suck out their [the French people's] substance as they have done heretofore."¹

The Poor as Producers

Poverty and unemployment were problems which affected France in the sixteenth century much as they did Elizabethan England. In the efforts of the French to deal with them two motives are clearly discernible: the first was Christian charity, a wish to alleviate suffering and want; the second was a desire to put the idle to work and thereby to increase the productive powers of the country.² Because there were two separate con-

¹ *Ibid.*, Vol. XIII, pp. 285-287. It was this same de Roberval who commanded a voyage to Canada in 1542-1543. He was granted extensive privileges over the mines of France in 1548, 1552 and 1557. See H. P. Biggar, *The Voyages of Jacques Cartier*, (Ottawa, 1924) and *A Collection of Documents relating to Jacques Cartier and the Sieur de Roberval*, (Ottawa, 1930).

² In the wish to force work upon the idle there was also a very definite, Puritanical desire to punish the culprits for being poor and unemployed. The problem of the poor had become a matter of state policy because of the partial breakdown of the charitable

siderations behind all legislation on the subject, there was likewise a clear distinction in the treatment of the poor. For those capable of work, work was to be provided, nay rather it "was to be forced on them. To those incapable of labor, alms were to be given.

By a declaration of 1545 the "sturdy beggars" of Paris were to be employed on public works and made to toil for long hours. The infirm and needy were to receive alms and nourishment.¹ This policy was considerably strengthened by an edict two years later. In this it was pointed out that the indiscriminate distribution of charity merely served to support "sturdy beggars" in idleness, to attract them to Paris from other centers whence they brought diseases, and to deprive the disabled poor of their rights. An effort was to be made to "take away all opportunity for idleness from the healthy" and to "give them the means of earning a living." In pursuance of this policy new public works were to be inaugurated. All women able to work but unwilling to do so were to be whipped and driven out of Paris, while men who fell in the same category were to be sent to the galleys.²

The enforcement of earlier legislation was urged by a declaration of 1558, which pointed out that the beggary by the church, city, and lay organizations which had dealt with the matter in medieval times. See, Thorndike, L.—*The Historical Background* (a section in *Intelligent Philanthropy*, Chicago, 1930), pp. 31, 44 ff.

It is not to be thought that the problem of the poor was new in the sixteenth century or that the efforts to solve it were based in great part on mercantilist theory.

¹ Isambert, Vol. XII, p. 900. The Elizabethan phrase "sturdy beggar" is used as a translation of "*mendian valide*."

² *Ibid.*, Vol. XIII, p. 23.

gars and idle in Paris were causing crime and disorder. A census of the unemployed was to be taken; no tavern was to feed them, they were all to leave the city within twenty-four hours, and if they failed to do so they were to be sent to the galleys.¹ In purpose this regulation seems to have been designed to reduce crime rather than to solve the problem of poverty.

In the Estates General of 1560 it was the clergy who took up the question of the poor at greatest length. In the *cahier* of that estate, article 135 read:

“May it please the king to decree and forbid that there be here any idle people and vagabonds, including the Egyptians [gypsies], sturdy beggars and other useless people of the cities and other parts of his kingdom, and let them be employed on public works, and cause each one to busy himself with some trade or craft to earn his living and avoid idleness, mother of all vices.”²

The nobles too urged that the idle be set to work on public construction.³ In his reply to the *cahier* of the clergy the king (Charles IX) indicated that he intended to “purge his whole kingdom . . . of vagabonds, self-styled Egyptians.”⁴ In fact the general ordinance of 1560 based on the advice of the Estates General did provide that all vagabonds were to leave the country under penalty of corporal punishment and the galleys. Better to recognize old offenders royal

¹ *Ibid.*, Vol. XIII, pp. 509-512.

² Mayer, Vol. XI, p. 55.

Recueil des Cahiers etc. Vol. I, p. 53.

³ Mayer, Vol. XI, p. 94.

⁴ *Recueil de Pièces etc.* Vol. I, p. 284.

officers were instructed to clip the hair of men and women and shave the men.¹

In the *cahiers* of the Estates of 1576 all three estates dealt with the problem in much the same terms. The clergy advised that "all vagabonds be constrained to leave, or be employed on public works, and no idle persons . . . be allowed or tolerated."² The nobles wished all "sturdy beggars and idlers" to be forced to work and whipped if they refused. They felt also that pilgrims should be provided with certificates to authenticate their status.³ The members of the third estate wanted "sturdy beggars" put to work, or whipped, or banished.⁴

It was idleness, according to the Assembly of Notables of 1583, that was causing crime and vice in France. The remedy was to establish manufactures and thus give employment to all.⁵ In 1588 the *cahier* of the nobles merely repeated the recommendations given by the same estate a dozen years earlier.⁶ It can be definitely stated, then, that in France in the sixteenth century there was a general desire to see the poor and the beggars put to work. In part this may have been due to a feeling that work had a moral value; in part it was also due to a wish that all the inhabitants of the country be productively employed.

¹ Isambert, Vol. XIV, p. 89.

² *Recueil des Cahiers etc.* Vol. II, p. 81.

³ *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 170.

⁴ *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 353.

⁵ Mayer, Vol. XIV, p. 232.

⁶ *Recueil des Cahiers*, Vol. III, p. 125.

Restrictions on Foreigners

There was one further theory as to the internal development of France that bore the impress of mercantilist motivation. It seemed to those interested in the development of France that in the economic exploitation of the country native Frenchmen should have more privileges than foreigners. A foreigner worked for selfish, not patriotic interests. Often he retired from the land with his ill-gotten gains thereby reducing the amount of money in the nation. Then, too, it was to be expected that he would conspire with his fellow countrymen in their designs on the wealth of France.

The third estate of 1560 was seriously disturbed by the question of foreigners in France. In their *cahier* they urged that all foreigners be forbidden to carry on banking in the country and that this business be restricted to "the native Frenchmen." If this could not be done at the very least foreign bankers should be forbidden to trade in goods save at wholesale, and in the products of their own country. Such regulations it was felt would lessen somewhat the large amounts of money that were continually going out of the realm. It was believed to be customary for these bankers to arrive in the kingdom with nothing except a "pen and paper in their hands," "become rich in a short while," "then stage a bankruptcy" and abscond with the proceeds. For such, "no adequate punishment" could be decreed.¹ In an ordinance (1563) supplementary to that based on the plaints of the Estates General (1560), it was ruled by the king that all foreigners wishing to

¹ Mayer, Vol. XI, pp. 463-464.

Recueil des Cahiers etc., Vol. I, pp. 436-437.

carry on banking in France must post a surety of fifty thousand *écus* for their good financial behavior.¹

The representatives of the three estates adopted much the same attitude in the meeting of 1576. The nobles and clergy advised that only "native subjects" be allowed to take part in the farming of the taxes, as the Frenchman by birth would have a "more natural inclination" to the king's service, and because the foreigners "thinking of nothing but profit" exhausted France of money and enriched other countries.² The third estate presented broader demands. They suggested that no foreigners be allowed to engage in banking or in farming the taxes and that all outlanders trading in France should be compelled to report to the officers in each locality with the papers authorizing them to carry on business. The incoming foreigner of 1576 was depicted as a somewhat more dashing figure than in 1560, for he was described as "having nothing and bringing nothing save a pen behind his ear, a sword and a cape." But it was still alleged that such visitors amassed great fortunes and caused French merchants to go into bankruptcy.³ The ordinance (1579) given on the basis of the *cahiers* of the estates of 1576 provided that each foreigner desiring to become a banker must post a surety of fifteen thousand *écus*, and each foreign

¹ Isambert, Vol. XIV, p. 169. In many cases the kings used and supported foreign bankers. The attack on them by the estates was, therefore, informed by a dislike of royal policy as well as by an antipathy for foreigners. That the king's assent to a limitation of the activities of these bankers may have been reluctant is indicated by the fact that it appeared only in the supplementary ordinance.

² *Recueil des Cahiers etc.* Vol. II, pp. 106, 107, 172.

³ *Ibid.*, Vol. II, pp. 332-335.

merchant must report to local officials to have his papers examined.¹

"Inasmuch as it is not reasonable that foreigners should take the bread from your subjects by whose aid your royal greatness is upheld," declared the *cahier* of the nobles in 1588, only "native Frenchmen" should be allowed to control the tax collection. Foreigners had "before their eyes only the profit by which" they exhausted the kingdom of gold and enriched their own nations.² In this view the third estate again concurred.³

Commerce

Of all the fields in which mercantilist theory has played its part and had its effects, the most important, from the earliest to the latest periods, was that of commerce. Such a preëminence was natural enough, especially in a country, like France, almost destitute of mines of gold and silver. In the sixteenth century Spain, on a basis of bullion drawn from her dependencies overseas, attained a position of seeming power and predominance. To France with no direct sources of supply of the precious metals the problem was how to acquire them. Commerce was the solution.

Commerce as a Source of Wealth and Power

It was early recognized that trade was a source of wealth. A French ordinance of 1459 called it "one of the chief supports to uphold and strengthen the power

¹ Isambert, Vol. XIV, pp. 380 ff.; articles 205, 357, 358.

² *Recueil des Cahiers etc.* Vol. III, p. 125.

³ *Ibid.*, Vol. III, p. 241.

of kingdoms and dominions.”¹ The joint *cahier* of the three estates in 1484 described commerce as “the means of creating wealth and an abundance of all kinds of desirable things in all kingdoms . . . without which public affairs could not well be carried on,”² and as “the chief source of the wealth and prosperity of a state.”³ The same feeling was evident in the next century. A royal declaration of 1543 stated that the wealth and comfort of the subjects of the country and “consequently the welfare and profit” of the kingdom depended on trade.⁴ A more elaborate digression on the theoretical value of international commerce is contained in an edict of 1557:

“It has always been realized . . . that the chief way of making peoples . . . comfortable, rich and wealthy has been and is liberty in the trade and traffic which they carry on with their neighbors and with foreigners, to whom they sell and with whom they barter and exchange goods, products and commodities which they take to them from their homeland, so as to bring back to it goods which they lack, together with gold, silver and other useful, necessary and profitable things; otherwise it would be necessary that the goods and fruits produced in these kingdoms . . . together with the manufactured products peculiar to the localities should be used and consumed there by the subjects and inhabitants; for whom, therefore, the greater part of their products, goods and manufactures would remain useless, and thus the lord of the land would be thwarted in his expectation and hope of profiting from his prop-

¹ Isambert, Vol. IX, p. 291.

² *Journal des États Généraux . . . en 1484*, p. 698.

³ Mayer, Vol. X, p. 82.

⁴ Isambert, Vol. XII, p. 810.

erty and the laborers and artisans from their work and energy.”¹

In the Estates General of 1560 there was expressed the same sort of sentiment with more emphasis on the bullion-gaining possibilities of trade. The *cahier* of the clergy pointed to commerce as “the means of supporting the people in wealth and of making the kingdom more opulent”;² while the *cahier* of the third estate described it as “not only useful but necessary in this kingdom for the export of the raw products and manufactures of the country and for getting gold and silver from abroad, the only method of enriching France in which there are no mines of gold and silver.”³ Commerce being recognized then as a source of wealth and a means of obtaining bullion, there grew up in connection with it a number of subsidiary ideas of mercantilist flavor. These can be discussed under the heads of imports, exports, and shipping and foreign trade.

Imports

In its fully developed phase mercantilist theory held that the importation of manufactured articles should be prohibited so that the profit resulting from the increased value of the goods after they had been worked up would remain in the country. A portion of the manufactures would be sold abroad and an inflow of bullion would be produced, while the export of bullion would be pre-

¹ *Ibid.*, Vol. XIII, pp. 506-507.

² Mayer, Vol. X, p. 54.

Recueil des Cahiers etc. Vol. I, p. 53.

³ Mayer, Vol. XI, p. 434.

Recueil des Cahiers etc. Vol. I, p. 427.

cluded by the fact that domestic manufactures dominated the home market. On the other hand it was considered desirable to admit and encourage imports of raw materials as these could be manufactured and exported at a great profit. Such views on imports are to be found in the sixteenth century both in embryonic and in well-developed form. Earlier examples must be considered with care since they may have been based on immediate circumstances. For instance, a law of Charles VII (1443) forbade the importation of English cloth, but it likewise prohibited fabrics from Normandy and the Bordeaux area, then held by the English. It was a war measure directed against an enemy.¹

Although in the earlier period the animus of the French was directed particularly against the importation of luxury fabrics, this was merely an exaggerated case of the attitude on other imports. Royal letters of 1516 forbade the bringing into the country of cloth of gold, cloth of silver, velvet, satin, taffeta and damask.² An ordinance on the same sort of textiles in 1540 seems to have been an attempt to ensure the collection of taxes on goods brought in rather than an effort to prevent or reduce imports.³ In 1538 at the request of

¹ Isambert, Vol. IX, p. 118.

Ordonnances des Rois etc. Vol. XIII, p. 389.

The law specifically states that its object was to prevent the sending of money to the English as had been done under pretext of a trade in cloth.

² Isambert, Vol. XII, p. 103.

³ *Ibid.*, Vol. XII, pp. 687-691. As all goods coming in from the south were to pass through Lyons, the king may have wished to build up the business of that town at the expense of other centers outside the country.

the Estates of Languedoc the king forbade the importation of all woolens from "Perpignan, Cathalogue, Sardoine, Castille" or other foreign places under penalty of fine and confiscation of the goods.¹ This law was a straight-forward prohibition with no exposition of motives.

A score of years later the third estate in the Estates General of 1560 urged in its *cahier* the exclusion of all luxuries coming from Italy or elsewhere.² Before the next meeting of the Estates (1576) an edict had been issued (1572) forbidding the importation of all "woolens, linens, fringes and embroideries of gold and silver, together with all velvets, satins, damasks, taffetas, camlets, linens and all other sorts of fabrics decorated with or having gold and silver, and likewise all harness for horses, belts, swords, daggers, stirrups and spurs gilded, silvered or engraved." Obviously this regulation was more than an attack on luxuries, and in fact it stated as one of its main objects the hope that thus the subjects could "better devote themselves to the manufacture and working up of wool, flax, hemp and tow . . . and from them make and get the profit that the foreigners [now] make."³

In the Estates General of 1576 mercantilist views on imports were equally explicit. The *cahier* of the nobles advocated the prohibition of all "silk fabrics from foreign countries, exception being made only for silk not worked up into cloths."⁴ The third estate declared that

¹ *Ibid.*, Vol. XII, p. 553.

² Mayer, Vol. XI, p. 467.

Recueil des Cahiers etc. Vol. I, pp. 439-440.

³ Isambert, Vol. XIV, p. 242.

⁴ *Recueil des Cahiers etc.* Vol. II, p. 168.

as one of the chief sources of the strength of France lay in the money that could be "attracted to it from neighboring nations, even indeed from those at a considerable distance,"¹ and as the best means of achieving this end was to encourage home manufactures, no goods which had been "worked up and manufactured" should be permitted to enter the kingdom.¹ A committee from the three estates in a special discussion held before the king urged that the importation of silks and cloth of gold and cloth of silver be forbidden since then "foreigners would be forced to send us their silk all unworked . . . and all these cloths would be made by subjects of the king which would . . . bring them great profit."² For similar reasons a speaker urged the clergy that cloth of gold, cloth of silver, silver fabrics, velvets, satins, serges and taffetas be excluded.³

The Assembly of Notables of 1583 dealt at length with the question of encouraging manufactures. To achieve this purpose it seemed necessary to them to shut out foreign cloths. If existing treaties rendered such a step impossible the same result could be obtained by setting a price on the imports so low that the foreigners "would grow weary" of bringing them to France. To adopt such a policy would be merely following the example of the foreigners themselves. The prohibition of manufactured imports was thus desirable, but by the same token the bringing in of raw products should be encouraged. The Notables wished:

¹ *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 388.

² *Recueil de Pièces etc.* Vol. II, p. 227.

³ *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 319.

"to permit the free entry of foreign wool, flax, hemp, raw silk, wax, copper, Brazilwood, cochineal, Brazilwood dye, and other unmanufactured foreign goods, some necessary and others very useful for this kingdom; and the effect . . . would be to create in France the manufacture of silks, to give employment thus to an infinite number of people, and to keep in the kingdom more than two millions of gold which are exported on this account into Italy."

To facilitate this importation of unworked goods taxes should be reduced on them, and likewise to encourage foreign workers to come and teach the French, certain privileges should be granted to skilled immigrants. Some might fear that the Italians incensed because their silks were banned might refuse to bring their raw silk. This anxiety was groundless, as the Italians had "no other place where they" could "sell it more conveniently." If worse came to worst France could get enough of the raw product from the Levant. The only loss from the new policy would be a reduction in the tariff duties, but once the silk manufacture was established in France the king could tax it and raise large sums. The king was therefore advised to endure the temporary loss, for "so great a good for his whole kingdom, resting assured that his subjects being made capable of it would gladly give back to him double the amount [lost on customs duties] in some other way."¹

¹ Mayer, Vol. XIV, pp. 234-236. The question of the internal customs duties is not treated since its connection with mercantilism is tenuous. That such duties were attacked in the Estates of 1484, 1560, 1576 and 1614, is however an indication of the growing feeling that France was an economic unit. See, Picot, G.

Exports

As to exports, mercantilist theory treated them, as might be expected, in a manner just the reverse of that in which it dealt with imports. That is to say, manufactured exports were to be encouraged, raw material exports to be forbidden. In France there were, however, certain staple products which might be regarded as not manufactured, which were none-the-less to be exported. Grain, wine and salt, for instance, were always held to be suitable for export, save in times of shortage, since France produced large quantities of them, and since their sale abroad brought in considerable sums of money.

In France during the sixteenth century there was an elaborate series of export taxes inherited from earlier periods. In 1553 the question arose as to whether printed books, which were not mentioned in the old tax regulations, were to be subjected to an export duty. For three reasons it was decided not so to tax them and this decision was proclaimed in an edict. First, it was declared that there was a "great profit and return which the art of printing" brought into the kingdom and to the inhabitants thereof "because of the great quantity of books which" were printed in the cities of the kingdom "and sold and distributed to foreigners in different areas . . . from which large sums of money" came into France. Second, the widespread distribution of books would aid scholars. Third, printers in foreign countries were not taxed and would be able to undersell

Histoire des Etats Généraux (Paris, 1888), Vol. II, pp. 98-100, 393-394; Vol. III, p. 303 ff.; *Recueil des Cahiers*, Vol. IV, p. 384.

the French, were the latter forced to pay duties; a situation which would produce "a great loss on account of the money and other goods which" came in "from all sides by means of this trade."¹ Further the book business deserved aid since it employed large numbers of the French.² Four years later certain newly laid export duties were abolished to encourage the shipment of goods out of France.²

The export of raw materials was prohibited by an edict of 1572, which categorically ordered that no wool, flax, hemp, or tow be shipped from the country in unmanufactured state, in order that these commodities might remain in France and be worked up there.³ At the next meeting of the Estates General (1576) the question of exports received serious attention. The archbishop of Lyons reporting to the clergy a discussion held before the king by a committee of the three estates told of one suggestion, that France lay an export tax on staple commodities which foreign nations had to purchase from her:

"The foreigners like the Flemish, English and Scotch, who come to seek grains and wines in France are made to pay on entering their own kingdoms . . . an écu for each *muïd*; the king might more reasonably

¹ Isambert, Vol. XIII, pp. 329-331.

² *Ibid.*, Vol. XIII, pp. 507-508.

Somewhat similar to this desire to encourage exports was the wish, evinced in the *cahier* of the third estate in 1576, and by a district *cahier* of the third estate in 1588, that the standards of fine dyeing be upheld in France so that foreigners would bring their cloths thither to be tinted. See *Recueil des Cahiers etc.* Vol. II, p. 350; *Recueil de Pièces etc.* Vol. IX, p. 246.

³ Isambert, Vol. XIV, p. 242.

have it paid as the goods leave his kingdom, without hurting his people . . . and from this he might receive more than six to seven hundred thousand *livres*. The same could be done for woad and other things grown in the realm.”¹

The more usual demand, for the prohibition of raw exports was made by the archbishop on the same occasion:

“A great profit would also result if commodities not manufactured nor worked up were prevented from going out of the kingdom. Because the people would busy themselves in working them up and would thus earn money wherewith to live and pay taxes; for example, the *balle* of wool exported from the country to be taken into Italy, where from it they make and manufacture their Florentine serges, is sold for only forty-five *livres tournois*. When they bring it back into France, of the same weight but converted into their serges, it is worth seven or eight hundred *livres tournois*, and thus they grow rich on our goods; and if the export of these raw materials was forbidden the subjects of the king, or the foreigners even, would be forced to work them up in this kingdom, to their great advantage; because they could afterwards export the finished products to foreigners; not to mention the manufacturing profits which would remain in France.”²

¹ *Recueil de Pièces etc.* Vol. II, pp. 226-227.

Since Bodin represented the third estate of Vernandois in this meeting of the Estates General, and since he advocated almost identical plans in his various works, it is not unreasonable to attribute this suggestion to his influence.

² *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 227.

While the clergy were making up their *cahier* in this same meeting of the Estates General, and were discussing the financial difficulties of the country, a number of propositions were made. One deputy set forth, "the inestimable profit to the king if he forbade the export of wool and flax and also the importation of cloth of gold, cloth of silver, silver fabrics, velvet, satin, Florentine serges, and taffetas, and allowed the entry of gold and silver thread only, . . . the reason being that the materials for these velvets, satins, serges, and taffetas were in France, only the workers were lacking. Now if you keep the materials the workers will have to come to seek you out. The high prices of these things come only from the manufacturing and thus it is that what you sell as forty *livres*¹ worth of wool to a Florentine he re-sells to you for eighty, when he brings it back to you in your kingdom after it has been manufactured, that is to say worked up; this profit would then revert to you [if the goods were manufactured in the country]. And if the objection is made that the customs receipts would thereby be diminished, the reply is that the above-mentioned profit is ten times as great as that from the customs."²

With such ideas in the air it is not surprising that the *cahier* of the nobles advocated the prohibition of the export of all unmanufactured goods,³ while the third estate urged the king to put this prohibition into effect in order to encourage manufactures, employ large numbers of people, and attract bullion from foreign nations.³

¹ *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 319.

² *Recueil des Cahiers etc.* Vol. II, p. 168.

³ *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 388.

The Assembly of Notables of 1583 held in its recommendations that one of the chief ways in which the establishment of manufactures could be secured would be:

"to forbid and strictly to prevent the export of wool, flax, hemp, and other raw materials, the effect of which will be to preserve and support the making of linen which is beginning to diminish rapidly because our neighbors are trying to learn it, to reestablish the manufacture of woolens which used to be so important and renowned in France that all the Levant and a number of other nations were supplied therefrom, and for the weakened condition of which we can find no other reason or excuse than the taxes which have been laid on these goods, which have caused the merchants to close up their workshops, while the artisans driven by necessity have withdrawn into England. But the chief cause is our own carelessness and the energy of our neighbors who have found ways of getting from us these raw materials and then bringing them back to us all manufactured, and for each *écu* that they hand out to us they get back from us more than a hundred, to prevent which it will be sufficient . . . to have the above-mentioned prohibition strictly observed."¹

Five years later the *cahier* of the nobles in the Estates General offered for the same problem the same solution.²

Shipping and Foreign Trade

How to encourage shipping and how to use the facilities of the central government in support of mercantile

¹ Mayer, Vol. XIV, pp. 233-234.

² *Recueil des Cahiers etc.* Vol. III, p. 124.

emprises abroad were not major problems in sixteenth century French economic theory. But the coming importance of these questions cast its shadow before. The *cahier* of the third estate in 1560* urged the king to secure, through his ambassadors, for French merchants in foreign lands, rights and liberties at least equal to those enjoyed by foreigners in France.¹ Then again something on the order of a fact-finding commission to aid commerce was envisaged by a law of 1572. Royal officers were to gather data and to notify the king twice a year as to the abundance or scarcity of all sorts of products in the various provinces, "since," read the edict, "it is indeed necessary for the good of our subjects, and to permit open commerce with the lands adjoining this kingdom to know the true abundance of fruits and other things produced in it." The reports were to include such commodities as grains, wines, woad, salt, oils, linens, cordage, iron, paper, hardware, cattle, sheep, hogs and mules "both male and female."²

The object of an edict of 1584 was to encourage shipping both directly and indirectly. Since "large ships" were able "more easily to endure the sea hardships of long voyages," and, it is to be assumed, since long voyages were considered beneficial to the country, all those who built vessels of over three hundred tons burthen were to receive bounties, immunities and privileges. Regulations were adopted to protect and support the herring and other fisheries. Further a table of

¹ Mayer, Vol. XI, p. 457.

Recueil des Cahiers, Vol. I, p. 429.

² Isambert, Vol. XIV, p. 243.

French import and export duties together with those of other countries was to be drawn up to assist merchants in planning their ventures.¹ The protection rather than the encouragement of shipping interested the nobles of the Estates General of 1588, for they urged that a part of the salt tax be devoted to the building and maintenance of "eight or ten good vessels" to guard the coasts and the commerce of France. A few royal ships in the Mediterranean would prevent, they felt, the ravages of the Barbary pirates.²

In France, then, between 1453 and 1584 there grew up or crystallized a number of separate ideas and theories mercantilist in flavor, which tended to group themselves around such subjects as bullion, luxury, self-sufficiency, industry, mines, the employment of the poor, the restriction of foreigners, commerce, imports and exports. Some evidence as to these ideas and theories can be obtained from theoretical digressions in the laws, and from the opinions expressed in the Estates General, enough to make it clear at any rate that mercantilism in France before 1589 was a matter of discrete views applied most frequently to fairly concrete situations. The day of mercantilist systems was yet to come.

¹ *Ibid.*, Vol. XIV, pp. 581-585. The relatively great capital investment in large ships necessitated royal support.

² *Recueil des Cahiers etc.* Vol. III, pp. 155-156.

The nobles likewise urged the consideration that the existence of a number of royal galleys would help to implant a proper fear in the hearts of idle vagabonds throughout the country.

Jean Bodin

Not only in the laws and assemblies, however, must nascent mercantilism be sought. By the time of Charles IX, writers had begun to treat of economic topics, though usually, it is true, in connection with other fields like politics, religion or finance in which the Frenchman of the period was more particularly interested. Preëminent among these writers was Jean Bodin by reason both of his genius and of his scope.

Jean Bodin (1520-1596), a native of Angers, achieved fame in the sixteenth century as a magistrate and publicist.¹ That his reputation has endured so long is due largely to his most famous work, the *Republic*, in which he controverted many of the theories of Machiavelli, and pointed to a moderate monarchy as the ideal. A comparatively small portion of his works deals with economic subjects for he was much more interested in political theory, in history, in the influences of geography upon mankind. But his pages on economic matters are not to be ignored for in one short

¹ Bodin studied law at Toulouse, migrated to Paris, and started to practice there. Having won the favor of Henry III he was appointed king's attorney for Laon. In the same year he represented the third estate of Vernandois in the Estates General at Blois where he took an active part in the discussion of the religious and other issues. He did not ally himself with either the extreme Catholics or the extreme Protestants but rather advocated a middle course. The last twenty years of his life were spent at Laon. His fame is based in large part on his political treatise, *Les six livres de la république*, 1576, one of the most important works ever written on the theory of government.

book (*Discours de Jean Bodin, etc.*) he laid the foundation of the quantitative theory of money.¹

In 1566 a certain Sieur de Malestroit, a financial official, presented 'to the king, Charles IX, a little pamphlet in which he describes an apparently paradoxical situation in regard to the prices in France. Every one in France is complaining of the rising prices, and yet according to Malestroit prices have not risen during the last three hundred years. The solution of this seeming anomaly is, according to the author, the debasement of coinage. That is, while one pays more in *livres* for an article in the mid-sixteenth century than in the fourteenth, it is because the coins have in them less gold and silver. The prices of anything reckoned in gold and silver have remained the same, but as the coins have been reduced in intrinsic worth it requires more of them to purchase any given product, such as velvet.²

To this work Bodin replied in 1568, with the *Discours de Jean Bodin sur le rehaussement . . . et responce aux paradoxes de M. de Malestroit*.³ Bodin claims that, contrary to the facts presented by Malestroit, prices have risen, nay doubled and tripled, within the last one hundred years. He is dealing, he says, not with the prices in coin, but with the prices in pure gold and silver. The fault in the argument of his opponent

¹ For an estimate which minimizes the importance of Bodin's contribution to this economic theory see Harsin, P.—*Les doctrines monétaires et financières en France*, pp. 39 ff.

² Malestroit,—*Paradoxes . . . sur le faict des monnoyes*.

³ The edition employed for this study is that of 1599, bound with *Les six livres de la république*, and bound and paged continuously with the *Apologie de René Herpin, etc.*

is that not enough articles were considered. Velvet, for instance, is being made in greatly increased quantities at comparatively lower prices. According to Bodin the real explanation of the rise in prices is not the debasement of coinage alone, although he recognizes this as a crying evil and as a factor in the apparent rise. The true explanation is the great increase in the amount of precious metals to be found in France. From Africa and the New World via Spain gold and silver have been pouring into France for a hundred years. As the amount of bullion in the country increases, its value in relation to other commodities decreases. It takes therefore more of a precious metal to make a purchase. Thus clearly, succinctly and with remarkable acumen Bodin lays the basis for the now long-accepted quantitative theory of money.¹

Bodin, realizing that a great increase in the amount of precious metals in a country acts merely to raise prices, cannot of course enter wholeheartedly into any naïve worship of bullion as the chief wealth of nations. He can, however, and does, display in his works various other tendencies that make it necessary to consider him as in some respects a forerunner of the mercantilists. He points out, for instance, the ways in which France is able to get gold and silver although she has no mines. He is particularly impressed by the sums secured from

¹ Bodin, *Discours de Jean Bodin etc.*, pp. 44-49 and *passim*, see also *Les six livres de la république*, pp. 882-883, etc.

Bodin gave also several other ancillary causes for the rise in prices. Among these he lists: the high level of prices in Spain and Portugal which tended to elevate that in France; scarcity caused by too great exports; excessive luxury introduced by the court; and waste. See, Bodin, *Discours etc.*, pp. 50-54.

the Spanish who are “constrained by an inevitable force to get here [in France] grains, linens, woolens, woad, *radon* [?], paper, books, even furniture and all sorts of manufactures.” Thus through her artisans, her merchants and her natural fertility France obtains money from Spain.¹ The same holds true for other nations :

“The English, Scotch and the people of Norway, Sweden, Denmark and the Baltic coast, who have a large number of mines, go and delve into the depths of the earth for metals to buy our wines, our saffrons, our prunes, our woad and above all our salt which is a gift which God gives us through especial favor with little labor [on our part] because the heat being somewhat lacking for the northern people, beyond the forty-seventh degree, salt can not be made, and below the forty-second degree the heat, too ardent, makes the salt corrosive.”

The English, Scotch, and other northern peoples often come, therefore, their “ships laden with sand [i.e., in ballast] to buy our salt with good hard cash.”² Salt, wine and wheat are, according to Bodin, the inexhaustible mines of France.³

France is fortunate too, claims Bodin, in the great number of her inhabitants :

¹ Bodin, *Discours etc.*, p. 49.

² *Ibid.*, p. 49.

³ Bodin, *La République*, p. 876. He contrasts them with metal mines which are exhausted in a few years. He had the peculiar medieval idea, however, that metal mines could renew themselves in the course of centuries.

"The . . . cause of so many good things which have come to us in the last six or seven score years is the infinite population which has multiplied in this kingdom since the civil wars of the house of Orléans with the house of Burgundy quieted down . . . because the foreign wars which we have had since that time have been only a purging of the bad humors such as was needed by the whole body of the Commonwealth.¹

By means of this large and industrious population, land has been cleared, villages built up, cities enlarged. In fact the greatest boon Spain ever received from France was the immigration of French artisans, because the Spaniard is "marvelously lazy" while the Frenchman is "active and useful."² Still other sources of wealth are the trade with the Lévant, and the opportunities for profitable investment in the bank of Lyons which have attracted money from the inhabitants of Florence, Lucca, Switzerland, and Germany.³

On the question of national self-sufficiency Bodin seems to be torn by conflicting emotions. On the one hand he points out how few are the imports of France, oil and spices from Spain, drugs from Barbary and the Levant, alums, silks and woolens from Italy. Even these can be cut down, he insists, since equally good woolens and silks can be made in France, alums can be found in the Pyrenees if the search is made, and oil can be produced in quantities in Languedoc and Provence.⁴ On the other hand, imbued with an ideal of interna-

¹ Bodin, *Discours etc.*, p. 49.

² *Ibid.*, p. 50.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 51.

tional amity, Bodin desires the continuance of friendly trade between countries. Even if France could get along without foreign products which is not possible at all, "still," says Bodin, "we ought always to trade, sell, buy, exchange, loan, give actually part of our goods to foreigners and indeed to our neighbors, if this were done only to keep open friendly intercourse between them and us." The French owe it to God to share His good gifts with foreigners.¹ It is far better to make friends with foreigners than to make war upon them. Men are motivated by sordid gain, but God in His infinite wisdom ordered it that "there is no country on earth so richly endowed that it does not lack many things. A condition which God seems to have caused to preserve friendship among all the subjects of His Commonwealth, and to prevent, at least, their waging long wars, since they must always do business with one another."²

As a practical matter, however, Bodin believes that it is just to tax imports and exports.³

"As for the raw materials which are imported from foreign lands, it is necessary to lower the duty, and to raise it on manufactured articles [*ouvrages de main*] and not to permit them to be imported from foreign lands, nor allow the export of unworked materials like iron, copper, steel, wool, thread, raw silk and other similar commodities, so that the subject may gain the profit of working them up and the Prince the export tax."⁴

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 59.

² *Ibid.*, p. 60.

³ Bodin, *La République*, p. 875.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 877.

Export taxes are heartily approved by Bodin. Not to place such levies on salt, grain and the like is to help the foreigner at the expense of France.¹ It is the over-great export of such goods that helps to cause the high prices in France.² although this effect is to some extent balanced by the cheapness of articles imported in return.³

"But there is, indeed, one method put forward by those learned in the matter of taxation, which would benefit the people marvelously and would enrich the kingdom; it is to put part of the regular taxes on the export of wheat, wine, salt, woad, linens, and woolens, and especially on the wine, salt, and wheat which are the three elements on which, after God, the life of the foreigner depends. . . . Our living springs of wheat and wine are inexhaustible. If, then, part of the regular taxes is put on the exports, we shall have the goods at a much better price within the kingdom, because the foreigner will take less of them, and he will buy them for silver bullion, which will enrich the kingdom."⁴

Under existing conditions, "salt is cheaper in England, Scotland, and Flanders," points out Bodin, "than it is in France, except in Guyenne, which is a striking anomaly of statecraft and administration." A heavy export tax on French salt would not reduce the purchases by foreigners too much, for they would buy it even were the price tripled.⁵

¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 875-877.

² Bodin, *Discours etc.*, p. 51.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 60-61.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 61.

⁵ *Ibid.*

It is objected that such export taxes contravene existing treaties, but England, Poland and other countries lay heavy duties on the export of wool and fleeces.¹ France has done the same so that the poor subjects may "have the means of earning a living in cloth making and that the profit of their labor may remain in the kingdom."² But the French edicts are useless, complains Bodin, since a permit to export wool can be purchased:

"The Italians take out an infinite quantity of fleeces through the concessions which they obtain, a thing which injures the whole kingdom incredibly, because the goods of which the export is prohibited become dearer in foreign lands and remain on the hands of the producers and merchants of the kingdom [France] unless they give them for nothing to those who have the power to take them away; and the artisans and poor people die of hunger."³

Bodin is pleading, therefore, for import duties on manufactured articles to increase the amount of work done in France; for export taxes on staples, to aid the finances of the realm and to cheapen the products in the home market; and for well-enforced export taxes on raw materials to insure home industries an adequate supply. It must be remembered, on the other hand, that there are numerous passages in which the same author urges and approves unrestricted trade between countries as a means of increasing international good will.

¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 61-62.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*, p. 62.

To Bodin undue luxury seems very harmful. A large part of it is traceable, he feels, to the styles set by princes. For any object favored by a ruler immediately becomes the mode. A startling example is the short hair cut. It was forced on Francis I because of a wound in the head, but all the courtiers, following blindly, clipped their locks likewise.¹ Luxury causes waste and unseemly display. In fact it is "the source of all the vices and calamities of a commonwealth." A tax on luxury articles is, therefore, desirable:

"If one asks the means of raising taxes [affirms Bodin] which shall be to the honor of God and the profit of the Commonwealth, according to the desires of the rich, and for the benefit of the poor; it is to lay them on things which serve only to corrupt the subjects, like all sorts of sweetmeats, and all kinds of feminine ornaments, perfumes, cloths of gold and silver, silks, crêpes, embroideries in metal or silk thread, fabrics, and all works of gold, silver and enamel, all sorts of superfluous clothes and colors of scarlet, crimson, cochineal and the like, which must not be forbidden; because it is natural for men to find nothing more beautiful than that which is strictly forbidden to them; and the more luxuries are forbidden the more they are desired especially by silly and underfed men; it is necessary, then, to make them so expensive by taxes, that only the rich and the well-fed can use them."²

It is apparently with something of his desire to reduce luxury in mind that Bodin says in another place,

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 52.

² Bodin, *La République*, p. 887.

"I am of the opinion that it should be forbidden to trade with Italy for attars, perfumes, lead, parchment, imitation jewels, poisons and even to prohibit the entrance of bankrupts and exiles if they were not banished from their country for being too virtuous."¹ The last proviso is typical of Bodin's sympathy for all foreigners save the wicked ones. "As for foreigners," he insists, "I wish not only that they should be treated with gentleness and friendship, but also that any injury to them should be punished with all severity as the law of God commands, and even indeed that they should be free of the *droit d'aubaine*."²

Bodin cannot then be classed as a thorough mercantilist, for he had too much acumen to overestimate the value of bullion, and he was too cosmopolitan in his sympathies for any narrowly national economic system. But he showed the influence of various elements of the doctrines that were beginning to find expression in France. At times he approached fairly close to a mercantilist stand on import and export duties. He was interested in the prosperity of his country. He inveighed against luxury, rather, however, from a moral point of view than from a desire to save the money of the land. He did not scorn the power of the precious metals, and he was much impressed by the example of Spain, where the inhabitants though "haughty and lazy" were rich and lived comfortably on the products

¹ Bodin, *Discours etc.*, p. 60.

² *Ibid.*, p. 60. The *droit d'aubaine* was the right formerly possessed by the crown in France of confiscating all the property, real or personal, of which a domiciled alien died possessed.

of France and other countries which they bought with gold and silver.¹

Contemporaries of Bodin

That Bodin's ideas on commerce and industry were not altogether peculiar to him is shown by an examination of the work of his contemporaries. In the *Miroir Politique* of Guillaume de la Perrière published in 1567, for instance, there is a plea for kindly treatment of foreigners. Foreigners come to buy French goods which might otherwise not find a market; they should therefore be well received. Nature has so divided her bounty that communication between countries is necessary. It is natural and right to get ivory from India, cloth from England and so forth.²

On the other hand a distinctly anti-foreign bias is to be found in such works as the *Miroir des François* by

¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 49-50. An anonymous work which appeared in 1574 entitled *Discours sur les causes de l'extrême cherté qui est aujourdhuy en France et sur les moyens d'y remedier* is sometimes attributed to Bodin. The general tenor of its ideas and certain specific passages certainly do bear a close resemblance to the *Discours de Jean Bodin etc.* But as the author admits that he has drawn upon the writings of the great publicist the book should probably be considered as inspired by rather than written by Bodin. In it the causes of the rise in prices in France are held to be: the abundance of gold and silver, luxury and waste, monopolies, too great export of staples, high living by princes, excessive taxes, debasement of coinage, bad crops and wars. The remedies suggested include: careful regulation and administration, reduction of luxury and taxes, limitation of exports and a system of public granaries. Foreign trade is considered necessary and beneficial, and gold and silver are held to be an important part of the wealth of a country.

² Perrière, *Miroir politique etc.*, pp. 123-124.

Nicolas de Montand (pseud.) of 1581. The author's hatred is aroused especially by the Italians. "This nation [France]," he says, "is naturally gentle and willing, having always loved piety and justice, but it has degenerated now from its original state in so far as it has been corrupted and depraved by some Italians and other foreigners who have got so far ahead that they rule here the native-born French with a rod and give them their laws."¹ "Men's and women's styles and other things luxurious, vicious and corrupt" have come out of Italy "with its diseases, so that France is quite infected and polluted with them."² "An Italian artisan," claims this author, "who has brought with him only a sword, a dagger, and idle chatter will have made in ten or twelve years more profit in France than will the good patriot in his whole life."³

Italians as officials in France, are very unjust and oppressive, according to Montand. They hold the best offices, and own the best estates and houses. They live in luxury corrupting French men and women and leading them into "so much shame and obscenity that the sky, air and other elements are all stinking with them."⁴ Such leeches should be banished. With the Italians gone, once more French men would become masculine and French women pure.⁵ All Italians should

¹ Montand, *Le miroir des françois etc.*, p. 24. The author was almost certainly a Huguenot since he shows a pronounced anti-Catholic bias. His hatred of foreigners was perhaps inspired by his dislike of the influence of Catherine de Medici.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 24-25.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 31.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 27.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 29.

be listed, rounded up and examined. Then it could be discovered which ones are usurers and bankrupts, which ones are in communication with the enemies of France, which ones have with them evil women and illegitimate children, which ones are suspected of unnatural crimes.¹ No longer would real patriots and native-born Frenchmen kill each other merely to make room for more of these foreigners.²

In another work of the same date, and probably by the same author,³ *Le Secret des Finances de France* of N. Froumentea (pseud.), there are eulogies on the natural resources of France more extravagant than Bodin's but quite like those of later writers such as Montchrétien:

“This kingdom which has always had the reputation of being one of the most beautiful, richest and most opulent of the world, is that (Sire) of which you wear the crown; its very exquisite beauty lies in the fact that it is enriched by a perfect abundance, variety and beauty of all things, neither more nor less than a large and magnificent palace well and richly equipped with all that is necessary to it. Because all its provinces are so well and suitably dotted with towns and cities, so well

¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 25-26.

² *Ibid.*, p. 27.

³ Both these works are, according to Michaud's *Biographie Universelle* the product of a certain Huguenot, Nicolas Barnaud, who also wrote a tract against the Catholic massacres of the Huguenots. Internal evidence makes it likely that these two books are by a single author. For instance in both the confiscation of all church property is urged. Likewise it is suggested that the monks, friars and nuns be put to work. Both also show a certain disregard for the royal dignity and prerogatives.

traversed by streams and rivers, of which, beside the sweet and pleasant navigation they afford, the mere sight makes men happy, and which on the other hand water the fields and lands which produce in their season of fertility crops so great and so fortunate that there are few foreign countries near and far which do not share in the abundance.

“The excellence of this [kingdom] lies in the fact that it is inhabited by men, who to tell the truth represent like a *chef d’œuvre* the most supreme perfection which can be found under the mantle of heaven, endowed as they are with singular graces; both in letters and arms and in all other professions the honor and prize is rightfully granted to Frenchmen and . . . France is admired as the mirror and object of Christian glances.”¹

In two works published in 1578 François Garrault shows that he was not uninfluenced by the writings of Bodin. One deals with the arguments for and against the use of the *livre* as against the *écu* in financial computations. In it the author denounces the debasement of coinage in most decided terms:

“One of the greatest evils that the undue debasement of coinage has caused, has been the export of sound and good coin, in place of which are brought back into this kingdom a great number of other coins, feeble and altered, which are given out as good and at a higher price than that at which they circulated in the country where they were minted.”²

¹ Froumentea, *Le secret des finances de France*, p. ii *recto*.

² Garrault, *Recueil des principaux avis etc.*, p. Avii.

According to Garrault the disorder in money was due to lack of gold and silver which in turn was caused in large part by wars.¹

The second work by Garrault enters into the Bodin-Malestroit controversy on the side of the former. High prices are due to the abundance of money. One of the chief evils of debasement is that foreigners can buy French goods, giving in return but a small quantity of the precious metals. "The Spanish, Portuguese and Flemish," says Garrault, "with little gold and silver have bought and exported a large part of our wheat, wines and linens, and in such quantity that famine and lack of everything are to be feared in the future, which is the fruit and result of such debasement."²

Particularly inspired by the ideas of the author of the *Republic* is an anonymous work of the year 1580 entitled *Traité des Finances de France*. Export taxes seem an especially suitable way of raising money to the writer of this pamphlet. Such duties were levied as far back as 1376. If taxes on articles made and consumed in France are proper, so certainly are export duties. In fact both export and import taxes are just, since "it is reasonable that he who wishes to profit from the subjects of another country should pay some duty to the prince."³ The author copies Bodin's *Republic* on the ways in which a state can raise money and on the point that the rise in prices is due to the abundance of gold and silver.⁴ Likewise he follows Bodin in

¹ *Ibid.*, B iii.

² Garrault, *Paradoxes sur le fait des monnoyes*, p. Bvii.

³ *Traité des finances de France*, pp. 364, 365, 376.

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 374 ff., 379-382.

advocating a tax on luxury articles such as perfumes, silks, cloth of gold and cloth of silver, which "serve only to spoil and corrupt maners." Indeed there are four hundred and fifty different kinds of merchandise of which at least half are of no use "except to corrupt the simplicity of the subjects."¹ To this nameless author as to his more illustrious model, idleness and poverty are the greatest plagues of the state.²

Thus a number of Bodin's ideas are to be found here and there among writers of the latter half of the sixteenth century. But none of them discussed economic matters with as much care and as much keenness as Bodin himself.

¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 384-385.

² *Ibid.*, p. 389.

CHAPTER II

THE SYSTEM OF LAFFEMAS

When, at the very end of the sixteenth century, comparative peace returned to France which had so long been torn by internal wars and disorder, it seemed to many that the opening of a new era was at hand. Fac-tions had been reconciled, foreign enemies repulsed, religious difficulties settled, lawlessness put down. An energetic and trouble-tested king was at the helm. The nightmare of religious strife was scarcely over before it was replaced by roseate dreams of peaceful triumphs. Trade, manufacturing and commerce, which had flour-ished under the house of Valois, but which had been seriously interrupted by the protracted turmoil, again became the objects to which men gave their attention. To many it seemed that, under the guidance of Henry IV, France was at last to regain the economic position which she had sacrificed to her religious quarrels. The wars had, however, left a serious legacy of problems. Standards of quality were low; foreign manufactures had usurped the market; many workers had emigrated and the ones who were left were unruly. Such condi-tions were a challenge to those who saw the future of France as dependent on an economic renaissance.

Among those who were most persistently advocating the manufacture of ploughshares from cast-off swords,

Barthélémy de Laffemas was outstanding. Born in 1545 in Beauseignant in Dauphiné of a very poor Protestant family, Laffemas never had the advantage of any formal education. For as he himself remarked, he "was never at the schools."¹ But by 1582 he was so far successful as to have become tailor and *valet de chambre* to Henry of Navarre.² At one time or another he engaged in various business enterprises of which one at least ended ingloriously in a debtor's prison.³ He always prided himself on the experience in trade which he acquired as head of Henry's silverware supply.

The fortunes of Laffemas were closely bound to those of his royal master, and when at length the King of Navarre became the King of France as well, the *valet de chambre* rose to a position of some importance, being charged occasionally with missions into the provinces. In 1602 he was appointed *Contrôleur Général du Commerce* and President of the *Conseil du Commerce* which at his instigation was created in that year and continued its sittings until 1604. Thus a Huguenot tailor became one of the chief men engaged in directing the economic activities of France. The king issued edicts at his advice. Important undertakings were under

¹ Laffemas, *Le quatrième avertissement du commerce etc.*, p. 15. The facts of his life are taken from his own works and from the accounts of Mongrédiens and Laffitte.

² These positions were probably purely honorary without any functions attached to them. See Hauser, *Le système social de Barthélémy de Laffemas*, p. 14.

³ A fact which may account for his strong opposition to imprisonment for business debts. See Laffemas, *Le cinquième traité du commerce etc.*, p. 10.

his control. In him manufacturing enterprises found their most ardent supporter.

That the efforts of Laffemas met with opposition is evidenced by many portions of his writings. He insists again and again that he accepted the position of *Contrôleur Général*, not for his own advancement but for the good he could do for France.¹ He offers to resign if anyone can "bring a better intelligence" to the work.² When accused of being the cause of the bankruptcies which he denounces, he denies vehemently that any merchant has ever lost an *écu* through him.³ He even carries his defense into the realms of poetry, and writes some execrable quatrains in his own behalf:

*"Autheur tu es blasmé d'infinis tous les jours
Ne cognissant le bien que tu fais pour la France:
Les Sages et discrets jugeront de l'offence.
C'est un oeuvre du Ciel qui veut prendre son cours."*⁴

Or again he thus compares himself with Columbus whose plans were, according to him, refused by the French with scorn:

*"L'on recognoist le mal des Conseillers de France
Du mespris de Collon des Indes l'inventeur,
À l'exemple de luy de denigrez l'Autheur,
Les Indes aux François a trouvé l'asseurance."*⁵

¹ Laffemas, *Advertissement et responce aux marchands etc.*, pp. 3-4. *Le sixiesme traicté du commerce etc.*, p. 2.

² Laffemas, *Second Traicté*, p. 6.

cf. *Advertissement et Responce etc.*, p. 7.

³ Laffemas, *Second Traicté*, p. 7.

⁴ Laffemas, *Premier traicté où est remontré etc.* under author's picture.

⁵ Laffemas, *Le sixiesme traicté du commerce* on the title page.

Part of Laffemas' efforts were practical, the directing of enterprises, the aiding of manufactures and the like. But part were literary, or at least in printed form, for in pamphlet after pamphlet, issuing from his pen between 1596 and 1610, he drove home his theories with passionate iteration. His grammar was faulty, his style atrocious, his works repetitious, but his sincerity was patent, his enthusiasm overwhelming and his patriotism indubitable.

After the death of Henry IV in 1610 Laffemas ceased to have any power. He died the next year unnoticed, but happy doubtless in the knowledge that he had done something to aid the economic rehabilitation of his beloved France. Of his children the only one who achieved fame or rather notoriety was Isaac, "l'âme damnée du cardinal de Richelieu."

France

To Laffemas, his native land is the supreme object of devotion. He groans at her defeats, glories in her triumphs, and worries over her difficulties. The wealth of France is to him a source of pride. The French, he insists, might be well off, for they live in "the most fertile and abundant kingdom of Europe, but they do not know how to use the gifts God granted them."¹ "Nature has so favored this realm," he points out, "that it seems to have been especially designed to rule all the others through the plentiful abundance of riches with which it is provided, not only sufficient for the needs and use of its people but enough to distribute to

¹ Laffemas, *Reiglement Général etc.*, p. 17.

its neighbors and to far-away lands.”¹ “Our French business men,” he complains, “do not appreciate the priceless boon they received from God when He caused them to be born in so rich and beautiful a country with such mild skies and such fertile, smiling lands that it can bear and furnish even metals, raw materials, fruits, and the like, of which we do not know how to make good use; a fact which has tended to draw off the money of our kingdom.”²

In these and similar passages there is always the note of disgust. France is endowed with all natural resources and advantages and yet the French, through bad management, laziness and carelessness allow themselves to become dependent on their neighbors not only for the luxuries but also for the necessities of life. “It is said by the ancients,” reports Laffemas in a tone of reproof, “that he who can dig a well in his own land should not borrow water from others; Plato approves this in his *Republic* and says that the greatness and wealth of countries and kingdoms consists in having the things necessary for the use of man without asking foreigners for them.”³

The Nature of Wealth

Of the various forms of wealth that France needs, gold and silver are to Laffemas the most vital. It is the shortage of money that is making the land poor despite

¹ Laffemas, *Les Trésors et Richesses etc.*, pp. 5-6.

² Laffemas, *La Commission, Édit etc.*, p. XV.

³ Laffemas, *Lettres et Exemples etc.*, p. 123. Laffemas must have liked this quotation for he repeated it, *Preuve du plant et profit etc.*, p. 3.

its natural riches.¹ It is the bullion that has gone out of France that has caused its poverty and want.² Gold and silver are, according to him, "the nerves and support of kingdoms and monarchies,"³ "the true matter and substance which maintains the state against . . . enemies,"⁴ "two noble metals, . . . the principal muscles that sustain" the state.⁵

The criterion of judgment for almost every form of economic activity is for Laffemas whether it takes out of or brings into France gold and silver. An amusing instance of this is to be found in his *Remonstrances politique sur l'abus des charlatans, pipeurs et enchaniteurs*, written in 1601. He has apparently been to some fair or festival where he saw "magicians and players of farces and comedies, and vendors of oils and ointments" and a man who made "a horse do monstrous things such as no Christian would make it do" as well as men with dancing monkeys and performers who stuck knives and daggers into themselves. All this is to him such light, frivolous and unworthy entertainment that it is a waste of time for Frenchmen to attend spectacles of this type. But the real cause of complaint, the disastrous element in a matter that would otherwise be merely a subject for mild censure, is that these entertainers are lightly allowed to take good money out of France.⁶

To keep bullion in the country this Huguenot tailor

¹ Laffemas, *Neuf advertissements pour servir etc.*, p. 3.

² Laffemas, *Sources de plusieurs abus*, p. 6.

³ Laffemas, *La Commission, Édit etc.*, p. XV.

⁴ Laffemas, *Les Trésors et Richesses etc.*, p. 6.

⁵ Laffemas, *Advis sur l'usage etc.*, p. 66.

⁶ Laffemas, *Remonstrances Politiques etc.*, pp. 5-6.

feels that peace, good order and above all wise regulation are the prime essentials.¹ This regulation should cover manufacture, wholesale and retail trade, maritime commerce and the like, and should be enforced by guilds, city councils, and committees.² Others may hold that new regulations would be difficult to enforce, or that it would be better to make changes bit by bit. But Laffemas insists that conditions are so bad that a wholesale reform is necessary. Henry IV, he is sure, will see to the proper enforcement.

Commerce

One of the fields that most insistently demands regulation is that of commerce. Now commerce is a great source of wealth.³ Certain enemies claim that Laffemas in advocating the regulation of commerce is seeking to destroy it. Nothing could be further from the truth.⁴ "Those who have no judgment," remarks this author pointedly, "say that it is desired to break off commerce with foreigners: but on the contrary let it go on by land and sea more than ever, [after] having stopped the robbery and trickery that France receives from foreign manufactures."⁵ Far from scorning the benefits

¹ Laffemas does not believe that the prohibition of the export of bullion does much good. It is better, he thinks, to let it in and out of the country freely; but to regulate commerce, industry, etc. in such a way that money will flow in and not out. See, Laffemas, *Comme l'on doit permettre etc.*, pp. 5 ff.

² Laffemas, *La Commission, Édit etc.*, *passim*.

³ Laffemas, *Le Sixiesme Traicté etc.*, p. 2; and *La Commission, Édit etc.*, p. XV.

⁴ Laffemas, *Advertissement et Responce etc.*, p. 7; *Responce à Messieurs de Lyon etc.*, pp. 17-18.

⁵ Laffemas, *Second Traicté, etc.*, p. 6.

of commerce Laffemas wants to see it enrich generation after generation of Frenchmen:

*“Vous tous qui mesprisez les effects du Commerce
Songez à voz enfants qu'il leur peult advenir.
Les riches en tout temps un chacun doibt mourir
Craignez que tous vois biens n'aillett à la renverse.”*¹

The difficulty is that for lack of proper regulation commerce is impoverishing France instead of adding to her wealth. The free fairs are a crying example of the evils of existing conditions. Formerly foreigners came to these fairs and bought for cash French manufactures “by which there came a great deal of treasure” into the kingdom. But now, laments Laffemas:

“The laziness and carelessness of the French have allowed the goods so to degenerate that instead of these foreigners bringing in gold and silver they have done and do the opposite. Having brought and bringing so great a number of these manufactures from their countries that little by little they have ruined the merchants and destroyed the commerce of this kingdom and take away its treasures at will.”²

Through the fairs more wealth leaves France than the king of Spain pays for the upkeep of his army.³ Indeed enough money is taken out via the fair of Lyons alone to support a whole army.⁴ The remedy for this

¹ Laffemas, *Le Quatriesme Advertissement etc.*, p. 15.

² Laffemas, *Premier Traicté*, p. 7.

³ Laffemas, *Responce à Messieurs de Lyon etc.*, p. 19.

⁴ Laffemas, *La ruine et disette d'argent qu'ont apporté etc.*, p. 5; cf. *Les discours d'une liberté générale etc.*, pp. 4-5.

abuse is simple; only French manufactures or foreign raw materials should be sold at the fairs.¹

The evil resulting from the fairs is only a sample of what is going on in all French commerce. The same sort of thing is to be seen in Paris "by reason of the great number of manufactured goods which are sold by all neighboring nations." As a result, Laffemas points out, "they carry away money by means of the merchants who trade with these foreigners, who out of a million *écus* that they receive do not employ a thousand, not five hundred indeed in exchange for manufactures of this kingdom." If this sort of trade continues, Laffemas goes on, "the city of Paris and a number of others will be drained of wealth like so many of the towns and villages where it is practically necessary to skin man and beast so as to coin out of their hides the money for their taxes and debts."²

French merchandise is no longer being sold in England:

"Consequently instead of trading by exchanging goods for goods, and receiving money for the staples of this kingdom, as in the past, the English do the opposite, sending into this country such an abundance of their manufactures of all sorts that they flood the country with them, even including their old hats, boots, and shoes, which they send to Picardy and Normandy by boatloads, to the great prejudice of the French."³

¹ Laffemas, *Responce à Messieurs de Lyon*, p. 9.

² Laffemas, *Premier Traicté etc.*, p. 72.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

So unfortunate are conditions that France, which ought to have "occasion to open her purse only to fill it, not to empty it" as she is doing, is contributing to the prosperity of Italy, Germany, Flanders and England while her own state is pitiable.¹ France sells her wool to Italy and buys back woolens.² French merchants look to immediate profits rather than considering the welfare of the nation and of future generations.³ The mule teams that come out of Italy bearing silk, go back laden with bullion.⁴

All in all it seems to Laffemas that to restore France to prosperity, commerce must be reformed and regulated;⁵ while he suggests that French merchants abroad be ordered to exchange their goods for gold and silver, or raw materials, not for precious stones, pearls or manufactured articles;⁶ and while he points out that only money taken out of the kingdom is lost,⁷ still it seems to him that the fundamental need in restoring commerce is first to restore manufacturing.⁸

¹ Laffemas, *Les Trésors et Richesses etc.*, pp. 6-8; cf. *Responce à Messieurs de Lyon etc.*, p. 13.

² Laffemas, *Source de plusieurs abus etc.*, p. 10.

³ Laffemas, *Le Tesmoignage Certain etc.*, p. 6.

⁴ Laffemas, *Responce à Messieurs de Lyon etc.*, p. 8.

⁵ Laffemas, *Les Trésors et Richesses etc.*, p. 3. See also, *Remonstrance au peuple etc.*, p. 16, and, *Le Troisième Traicté*, p. 8.

Laffemas also advocated uniform weights and measures as an aid to commerce, see *Neuf Advertissements etc.*, p. 11; *La Commission, Édit etc.*, pp. XVI, XXVIII; and *Les Trésors et Richesses etc.*, p. 19.

⁶ Laffemas, *Reiglement Général etc.*, p. 38.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 41.

⁸ Laffemas, *Le Troisième Traicté etc.*, p. 8.

Manufacturing

France was formerly a great manufacturing country, insists Laffemas. Those who speak of the nation as having always been agricultural are mistaken.¹ But of late years, France in her lethargy has been letting England, Flanders, Germany and Italy do her work for her with the result that she is becoming tributary to them.² Distressing as the situation is, the way to alleviate it is clear. Manufactures must be established, built up and regulated until France is able to supply herself without recourse to other countries. "To fill France with riches and wealth" states Laffemas, "keep her from seeking abroad what can be made and manufactured in France."³ Thus may France find the Philosopher's Stone.⁴ Manufactures will be her gold and silver mines.⁵ Manufactures will enrich the country, the people and the king.⁶

No longer will French raw materials be exported only to be worked up abroad and sent back to her in manufactured form, the wool of Languedoc, for instance, being sent to Milan to be made into serge.⁷ France is able to make all sorts of manufactures as well as, nay better than, any foreign countries. Her fustians and laces are better than those of the Low

¹ Laffemas, *Le Mérite du Travail etc.*, pp. 12-14.

² Laffemas, *Reiglement Général etc.*, p. 18; and *Les discours d'une liberté générale etc.*, p. 5.

³ Laffemas, *Source de plusieurs abus etc.*, p. 2.

⁴ Laffemas, *Reiglement Général etc.*, p. 18.

⁵ Laffemas, *Les Trésors et Richesses etc.*, p. 6.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 22.

⁷ Laffemas, *Reiglement Général etc.*, p. 11.

Countries; the silk and wool cloth and tamines of Rheims or Amiens "put foreign stuffs . . . to shame"; her arms are better made than those of Milan even; her leathers are superior to those of Spain or Flanders. The dyes, wool, and flax of France, claims Laffemas:

"show that we are fortunate in materials which we ought to manufacture, not sell raw to foreigners, who afterwards sell them back to our subjects, whence comes the cause of the great number of poor in all sections, who should be working and earning their living, a serious situation which we should recognize from the experience of these foreigners: because they live by their work without anyone's realizing the poverty of their land, through the regulations which they observe religiously; the large quantity of manufactured goods which they bring us makes our subjects scorn to work in our own raw materials."¹

To reestablish manufactures there must be royal aid,² and careful regulation. The guilds must be revived and used as the means of regulating work and keeping products up to a high standard.³ Over each guild in every city should be placed a *chambre* composed of the leading masters, who would supervise working conditions, products, workers, regulate disputes and improve conditions. Over these *chambres* there should be, in each of the larger cities, a bureau

¹ Laffemas, *La Commission, Édit etc.*, p. XVI. This passage translated rather literally, is a fair sample of the crudity and difficulty of Laffemas' untutored style. See also *Reiglement Général*, pp. 15, 16, 17.

² See section on work of *Conseil du Commerce*.

³ Laffemas, *Reiglement Général etc.*, p. 21 ff.

of manufactures with large powers of administration and regulation. Under such a system good order would soon be forthcoming and French industry would awaken to new life.¹

Of all the phases of regulation, however, the most important, on account of the aid it can give to manufacturing, is the prohibition of all importation of manufactured goods. "It is very necessary," Laffemas insists, "to shut out these [foreign] manufactures so that the good and loyal merchants may be busy henceforth in causing to be made goods and products for the profit of France."²

"The true reform [reiterates this author] and among the most necessary would be to shatter the designs of those who for a long time by cabals have continued to gather the treasures of this kingdom and to export them from it without let or hindrance and openly and, stopping such things by the prohibition of foreign manufactures, the treasures would automatically be preserved in this kingdom."³

Laffemas would like to see every manufactured article of foreign provenance forbidden, unless it is a

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 11 ff. and 28 ff. A very good discussion of Laffemas' system of regulation is to be found in H. Hauser, "Le Système social de Barthélemy de Laffemas," *Rev. Bourguignonne*, Vol. XII, pp. 113-131. Hauser points out that Laffemas was interested not in the workers or in the consumers but in the masters of the guilds, in the producers. His chief aim was to increase industrial production, and his reforms were shaped to that end.

² Laffemas, *Premier Traité etc.*, p. 17.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 28.

new invention.¹ In fact he wishes the law to read thus:

“We [i.e., the king] prohibit and forbid the entry into this our kingdom of all merchandise, products and manufactures made and worked up coming from foreigners, whether it be cloth of gold; of silver; textiles; serges; leathers gilt and tooled, or in the form of gloves, or otherwise; iron; steel; copper; bronze; watches; clocks; and in general all products whatsoever used as furniture, ornaments, and clothing, of whatever quality they may be and for whatever purpose they may be employed; we do not understand as included good books, nor likewise paintings and sculptures which shall be recognized as made and fashioned by good masters who lived during or before the reign of King Francis I.”

The penalties for breaking the law or abetting its infraction are to include banishment, confiscation and hanging.²

Contrary to the opinion held by many others Laffemas is convinced that such a regulation could be easily enforced were it once undertaken in earnest.³ But he admits that similar laws then in force are administered with a good deal of laxity. He himself calls attention to a recent case where five hundred pounds of gold thread of Milan were imported under

¹ Laffemas, *Reiglement Général etc.*, pp. 36-37. See also: *Les Trésors et Richesses etc.*, p. 22; and, *Neuf Advertissements etc.*, pp. 9-10.

² Laffemas, *La Commission, Édit etc.*, p. XVIII.

³ Laffemas, *Advis et Remonstrance etc.*, p. 16; *La façon de faire et semer etc.*, p. 32; *Premier Traité etc.*, p. 18.

a special license, to be made into tapestries for the king; although not more than three or four hundred pounds can possibly be used in them.¹ He is, moreover, sure that such legislation even if rigorously enforced would not raise prices in France, for in a short while France would be producing all the goods she needed just as economically as it can be done abroad.²

With great care, Laffemas makes it clear that he does not wish to interfere with the importation of raw materials.³ On the other hand it does seem advisable to him to prohibit the export of raw products proper for manufacture under penalty of confiscation and death.⁴ He does not labor this last point, since for some reason it seems to him less important than it was to sixteenth-century thinkers, and less vital than to later writers like Montchrétien.

That Laffemas' desire to reëstablish manufactures by means of a ban on imports of manufactured goods met with opposition is made clear by the Tours-Lyons controversy. Tours, which manufactured luxury fabrics, supported such a prohibition, while Lyons, an important entrepot and market for these goods, backed by the potent Sully, opposed all regulations of this type. On the advice of the Assembly of Notables of 1596, and much to the joy of Tours, Henry IV in 1599 issued an edict forbidding the importation of silks, cloth of gold and cloth of silver. Mustering their forces the merchants of Lyons by petition and constant pressure

¹ Laffemas, *Second Traicté etc.*, p. 4.

² Laffemas, *Reiglement Général etc.*, pp. 5-6.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 36-37; and *La Commission Édit etc.*, p. XVIII.

⁴ Laffemas, *La Commission, Édit etc.*, p. XXI.

worked for the repeal of this edict, so successfully that it was withdrawn as impractical within a few months. Nothing daunted, Laffemas continued his propaganda. The experiment had been premature, not ill-advised.¹

In fact, Laffemas goes so far as to identify those who oppose the prohibition of manufactured imports with the opponents of manufacturing in general. Such people he condemns not only as lacking in vision but as thoroughly disloyal:

"It must also be noticed that numerous merchants are opposed to the establishment of these manufactures, either from want of good sense or from selfish interest; and others [are opposed] because of the credit which foreigners extend to them, which usually ruins them in the end; so that there is no reason to consider the disloyal advice of these merchants who are enemies of themselves and of this country and quite unworthy to be summoned to public duties."²

That there are theoretical objections to the establishment of manufactures, Laffemas realizes full well; but he answers them all to his own satisfaction at least. In the first place there is the feeling that undue emphasis on industry would impair the agricultural pros-

¹ Laffemas' share in the controversy is well reflected in his *Reiglement Général etc.*, which was submitted to the king as a part of the program of industrial reform at the time of the Assembly of Notables of 1596; and in his rather bitter *Responce à Messieurs de Lyon etc.* Sully's attitude may be seen in his *Mémoires etc.*, p. 317 (Vol. 16). A careful, interesting and even dramatic account of this incident in French economic history is to be found in H. Hauser, "Le Colbertisme avant Colbert," *Revue Bourguignonne*, Vol. XIII, pp. 1-23.

² Laffemas, *Recueil etc.*, p. 245.

perity of France. Now although the king's tailor apparently knows little about farming, he has a profound respect for it. He even glories in the money that agricultural products might bring into the realm.¹ But he is sure that increased industrial efforts would aid agriculture, for, as he points out, the best cultivated areas in the country are those that lie near manufacturing cities.² Prosperous industries would increase the markets and the capital for farming.³

As to the other objections the replies are even more obvious. People say that the establishment of French manufactures would hurt foreign industries of which the products are needed by France. But France should make her own goods. Though there may be a temporary shortage of some articles, in the long run the country can supply all its own needs. It is alleged that foreign goods will come in even if prohibited, but not if commerce is properly regulated. Critics insist that vast sums of money would be necessary to start manufacturing establishments, but France has capital enough were it properly applied. Some think that rich foreigners are needed to found industries, but this is not true. Many feel that the Queen (Marie de Medici) being an Italian, it would be impossible to adopt any measures directed against Italian goods, but any steps taken to aid France will meet with the approval of the

¹ Laffemas, *Reiglement Général etc.*, p. 14.

² Laffemas, *La ruine et disette d'argent commune etc.*, p. 5.

³ Laffemas, *Advis et Remonstrance etc.*, p. 15. Cf. *Le Mérite du Travail etc.*, p. 12; and, *Reiglement Général etc.*, p. 5 (in supplement).

Queen.¹ People say that wealthy Parisians would control the new manufactures, but these opulent merchants are so patriotic that the whole country would share in the benefits. Many seem to feel that any changes must be introduced gradually, not all at once, but the situation is so serious that no half-way measures will suffice. Some point out that a reform of French habits and ways is the chief necessity; this cannot be denied, but the other improvements are none the less vital. In short there is no valid reason for not introducing the industries which the whole economic situation so urgently demands.²

Of all the opponents of Laffemas, the most persistent was Sully, chief minister of Henry IV. To him agriculture was far more important than industry, and he resented the innovations which Laffemas was fostering. There was also a natural personal rivalry between these two advisers of the king.³

Idleness, Poverty, Taxation

With manufactures re-established, it seems to Laffemas that the solution of the problem of idleness and poverty would be easy.⁴ He is continually seeking for a way to "drive away idleness" and to "employ and

¹ This point seems to have been frequently raised, since Laffemas answers it several times, see e.g., *Premier Traicté etc.*, p. 23, where he adduces the example of Catherine de Medici to disprove the allegation.

² These objections and replies are from Laffemas, *Advis et Remonstrance etc.*, pp. 8-19.

³ The theories of Sully are treated below at the end of Chapter IV.

⁴ Laffemas, *Le Cinquiesme Traicté etc.*, pp. 23-24.

support the poor.¹ To him drunkenness and laziness, evil in themselves, are the more injurious as causes of the widespread poverty which afflicts France.² In the opinion of this rather puritanical Huguenot, work is the law of the universe. The sight of one half of the population idle outrages his industrious sobriety.³ It is shocking to see men in want in such a plenteous land.⁴ Charity only aggravates matters for it is always the most unworthy who get the largest share of the alms. When food is distributed from private houses, crowds of the indigent collect; and these gatherings are breeding spots for vice and crime.⁵

In the first place drunkenness should be reduced by severe limitation of the taverns and cabarets which serve no purpose save that of making the poor poorer. Confirmed drunkards should be pilloried as is done in other better regulated countries.⁶ But as the real cause of poverty lies in the sale of foreign manufactures,⁷ so the real cure lies in putting the idle to work by manufactures. It is almost a divine task, since Laffemas claims, "it is certain that God gave man various sorts of work to prevent idleness and to form a natural means of paying the duties and taxes of kings, lords and others."⁸ The best method of employing the indigent is to establish close to every city two villages,

¹ Laffemas, *Les discours d'une liberté générale etc.*, p. 4.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 10-12.

³ Laffemas, *Le Mérite du Travail, etc.*, pp. 3-12.

⁴ Laffemas, *Troisième Traicté etc.*, p. 2.

⁵ Laffemas, *Le Quatriesme Advertissement etc.*, pp. 3-7.

⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 10-11.

⁷ Laffemas, *La Commission, Édit etc.*, p. XVII.

⁸ Laffemas, *Responce à Messieurs de Lyon etc.*, p. 7.

one for women and one for men. There they could be put to work on simple manufactures, those who are recalcitrant being constrained by "chains and prisons." Such a step would put an end to beggary and vagabondage. No longer would sturdy idlers sleep in way-side ditches like "dogs or brute beasts."¹ At times Laffemas' conception seems to approach rather closely a system of work-houses.² But the idea of little work-villages where the idle and useless would become industrious and thrifty thus aiding the reëstablishment of domestic manufactures is one of Laffemas' most unpractical remedies.

Another concomitant of the industrial rehabilitation of France might be, according to this tailor of the king, a great simplification of the system of taxation. He advocates the levying of one *sou* per *livre* on all goods brought into a city or sold there. After paying such a tax the goods would be stamped and would go anywhere in France entirely free of all further duties. Such a system would, he is sure, raise sufficient revenue, and by its very simplicity would free commerce and trade of a multiplicity of burdens.³

¹ Laffemas, *Troisième Traicté etc.*, pp. 2-7. See also, *Les Trésors et Richesses etc.*, p. 19.

² Laffemas, *La Commission, Édit etc.*, pp. XLII-XLIII. Cf. *Source de plusieurs abus etc.*, p. 16; and, *Reiglement Général etc.*, p. 35.

³ Laffemas, *Premier Traicté etc.*, pp. 8-12. *La Commission, Édit etc.*, pp. XIX-XX. *Advis et Remonstrance etc.*, pp. 4-5. This tax was suggested by the Assembly of Notables at Rouen in 1596. Sully opposed it; see Sully, *Mémoires etc.*, p. 237.

Luxuries and the Culture of Silk

Although the chief means of preventing the drainage of gold and silver out of France is, in the opinion of Laffemas, to reëstablish French manufactures; still there are other methods of vital importance. He urges vehemently, for instance, the reduction of the loss occasioned France by the excessive use of luxury articles. Despite the fact that France formerly adhered to a patriarchal simplicity, luxury is rampant in every class.¹ So disturbed is Laffemas by the existing conditions that he even praises that ancient tyrant of Syracuse who encouraged thieving by night to reduce the number of banquets and debauches.²

One form of excess that is quite disturbing to this simple Huguenot is the use of pearls. They cost much money and come from outside of France. But in the course of years they become yellow and useless, representing, therefore, a definite loss to the purchasing nation. "There is no burgher's wife," he laments, "or woman of middle station who does not wear a chain, necklace or bracelet of pearls, which is in part the cause of the great luxury which we see in this kingdom, to its great prejudice and damage, as by this means foreigners take away from it gold and silver."³

Among the luxury textiles, Laffemas approves the more durable cloth of gold and cloth of silver as

¹ Laffemas, *Remonstrance au Peuple etc.*, pp. 3-7.

² Laffemas, *Advis sur l'usage etc.*, pp. 1-2.

³ Laffemas, *Reiglement Général etc.*, p. 38; and *Les Trésors et Richesses etc.*, pp. 18-19.

against the ephemeral silk embroideries of Milan.¹ But he is exceedingly distressed that these stuffs are not of home manufacture, for to purchase theſn from abroad vast ſums of money go from France to Italy, Flanders and England.² The obvious solution is for France either to cut down on the use of such materials, or to make them for herself. In the latter case it would even be all right to manufacture them for export as the price received would be greater than the content of precious metal.³

Of all luxury articles, however, there is one that occupies Laffemas more than all the others. It is silk. Some attribute the growth of silk culture in France to Olivier de Serres or others. But if pages written, actual practical endeavors and unwearied persistence can be counted, Laffemas should receive the credit.

Of the losses France sustains in buying from foreign countries, those occasioned by the purchase of silks seem to this earnest reformer the most terrific. According to him two million *écus* go out of Paris alone every year for foreign silks.⁴ If there is a short-

¹ Laffemas, *Advis sur l'usage etc.*, pp. 56-57.

² Laffemas, *Source de plusieurs abus etc.*, p. 1.

In another place, Laffemas observes regretfully on the subject of luxury textiles:

"It is worthy of consideration that fifty or sixty years ago in Paris and the other great cities of France only woolen cloths were made with which all classes were clothed, and at present people wear only other materials coming from Italy, Flanders, England and elsewhere. That is why manufactures must be established in France, otherwise people will become poor and idle." Laffemas, *Recueil etc.*, p. 244.

³ Laffemas, *La Commission, Édit etc.*, p. XXIX; and *Advis sur l'usage*, pp. 66-68.

⁴ Laffemas, *La façon de faire et semer etc.*, p. 31.

age of money in France it is due to the sums expended on silks.¹ Taking merely stocks of this material, he estimates that fifty thousand people wear out four pairs a year, at the cost of four *écus* each. Thus eight hundred thousand *écus* a year leave France for one item of dress.² The buying of foreign silks has done France more harm,³ nay four times more harm⁴ than the long and destructive civil wars. More money has gone out of France for silks than has been spent on all her armies in the last twenty-five years. The ruin, the poverty, the want of France are due to the treasure she lavishes on these foreign textiles.⁵

As a first step Laffemas wants the importation of silks and luxury fabrics forbidden. This was done in 1599 at the instigation of the Assembly of Notables of 1596 and of the silk producers of Touraine. The experiment was ill-timed, however, and the edict had to be withdrawn in a few months.⁶ Undismayed, Laffemas, three years later, is still advocating such a prohibition and attributing the ill success of the earlier

¹ Laffemas, *Preuve du plant et profit etc.*, p. 3; and *Reiglement Général etc.*, pp. 5-6.

² Laffemas, *Reiglement Général etc.*, p. 8. Cf. *Source de plusieurs abus, etc.*, p. 8.

³ Laffemas, *Reiglement Général etc.*, p. 4.

⁴ Laffemas, *La ruine et disette d'argent qu'ont apporté etc.*, pp. 6-7.

⁵ Laffemas, *Source de plusieurs abus etc.*, p. 6. As this was written in 1596, the twenty-five years mentioned are 1571-1596, a stormy period. In this pamphlet Laffemas seems to look forward to the limitation of the use of silk, rather than to the production of it in France. He must have been converted to the latter project, however, very shortly, probably in 1597.

⁶ Sully claims that he opposed the edict from the first as unsound and premature; see his *Mémoires etc.*, p. 317.

effort to the selfish attitude of many of the merchants, and to lack of proper enforcement.¹

But Laffemas pins only a small part of his hopes on prohibitory legislation. He wishes to see France producing and manufacturing all the silk she uses. Careful study has convinced him that France is preëminently suited to silk culture.² Those who think her less well adapted than Italy are merely uninformed.³ France is not too cold and stormy for mulberry trees and silk worms.⁴ The belief that the country is not fit for silk culture is due to the "evil designs of certain French merchants, retailers of foreign silks" who for their own private profit spread such a report, "a pernicious action for which such folk should be punished to prevent them from ravaging the treasures of France."⁵ Laffemas reports that he himself tried raising silk worms, and though he was utterly ignorant of the best methods the subjects of his experiment thrrove and grew fat. Those who deny that France is a proper country for silk culture are controverted, according to Laffemas, by the admission of the Italians, Provençals, Spaniards, and Flemish, that in France the mulberry leaves are "softer and better than in their countries and the air more temperate for the silk worms."⁶ As

¹ Laffemas, *La façon de faire et semer etc.*, pp. 30-32.

² Laffemas repeats and elaborates this statement again and again, e.g., *Comme l'on doit etc.*, p. 6; *La façon de faire et semer etc.*, pp. 25-26; *Le plaisir de la noblesse etc.*, p. 3; *Preuve du plant et profit etc.*, p. 5, etc., etc.

³ Laffemas, *Advis et Remonstrance etc.*, pp. 11-13.

⁴ Laffemas, *Responce à Messieurs de Lyon etc.*, pp. 14-15.

⁵ Laffemas, *Lettres et Exemples etc.*, pp. 125-126.

⁶ Laffemas, *Premier Traicté etc.*, p. 19.

a culminating proof of his contention, this enthusiast points out triumphantly that on the map France is in a direct line with China which has always made the best silks.¹

Being naturally so well fitted for silk culture, France has an obvious opportunity. The first step necessary is the planting of mulberry trees on the leaves of which silk worms subsist. To the encouragement of this undertaking Laffemas devotes every effort. He points out the royal example of King Henry who has planted mulberries in the gardens of the Tuileries.² He gives the facts about the easy cultivation and rapid multiplication of these trees.³ He hails the mulberries as the potential saviors of France.⁴ He hopes that the opportunities of producing silk will "move the most hardened heart to plant mulberry trees promptly."⁵ He advocates a law by which all property owners, including clergy and nobles and especially monastic foundations, would be required to plant two, or three or four mulberry trees per acre.⁶ He even summons his poetic muse and turns out such verses as:

*"Tous qui nous enlevez les trésors de la France
Vos lustres de Satins s'en vont fort descouvers:
Car nos soys d'apresent de nos meuriers et vers
Vous font et vous feront perdre la contenance."⁷*

¹ Laffemas, *Preuve du plant et profit etc.*, p. 5; and *Le Tesmoignage Certain etc.*, p. 3.

² Laffemas, *Neuf Advertissements etc.*, p. 5.

³ Laffemas, *Preuve du plant et profit etc.*, pp. 7-11, etc.

⁴ Laffemas, *La ruine et disette d'argent etc.*, p. 10.

⁵ Laffemas, *Le Tesmoignage Certain etc.*, p. 5.

⁶ Laffemas, *La Commission, Édit etc.*, pp. XXIX-XXX.

⁷ Laffemas, *Le Tesmoignage Certain etc.*, p. 2.

In addition to urging that mulberry trees be planted, Laffemas gives careful and complete directions as to how they should be cared for, how the silk worms should be tended, and the raw silk secured.¹

In trying to establish silk culture in France Laffemas does not make his appeal to the patriotism of his audience alone. He paints glowing pictures, as well, of the profits which he is sure individuals can secure from the silk worms. The opportunity is especially great, according to him, for impecunious nobles who have a little land to spare.² Mulberries are more profitable than wheat or wine or oil, he claims.³ He even calculates how much money could be made from mulberry trees and silk worms in the whole of France. If each parish of the 28,000 in France should plant three to four thousand mulberry trees, the returns would be about five million two hundred and fifty thousand écus, as the average would be somewhere around one hundred and eighty-seven écus and thirty sous. In time the total product might easily be raised to ten million,⁴ or even to forty million.⁵ Those who remain unconvinced of the possible profits in silk culture are

¹ Laffemas, *La façon de faire et semer etc.*, pp. 1-24; and *La ruine et disette d'argent commune etc.*, pp. 5-6.

² Laffemas, *Les discours d'une liberté générale etc.*, p. 7; and *Le plaisir de la noblesse etc.*, pp. 5-6; Cf. *La ruine et disette d'argent commune etc.*, p. 7.

³ Laffemas, *Preuve du plant et profit etc.*, pp. 6-7; and *Lettres et Exemples etc.*, pp. 124-125.

⁴ Laffemas, *La ruine et disette d'argent commune etc.*, p. 3.

⁵ Laffemas, *La ruine et disette d'argent qu'ont apporté etc.*, pp. 14.

referred to the *Theatre d'Agriculture* by Olivier de Serres.¹

As an additional advantage of silk culture, Laffemas points out repeatedly that it can be carried on by women and children while the men tend the other crops. It would keep them out of mischief and ease the family budget at the same time.² This enthusiast tells of how he went to the village of Bourg la Royne to interview a boy named René Fortier who was raising silk worms successfully. The lad's mother was full of praise for the undertaking and said it was much less trouble than keeping a cow.³

Once the mulberry trees were flourishing and the worms spinning the silk all that would remain to be done would be to establish the manufacture of silks, or rather to reestablish it, for earlier attempts were frustrated only by the troubulous times of civil strife. Such disorder gave the ill-affected a chance to disrupt former undertakings. The case of Orléans was notable. There the manufacture of silk was well on the high-road to success, when about 1585 "some envious foreigners or retailers of their silks, from animosity, threw in their dyeing kettle a pot of resin or tar and spoiled all their silks . . . with the result that the poor workers were forced to leave, which shows that the great value and riches of these silks ought to be restored for the general good of the whole realm."⁴

¹ Laffemas, *Le Tesmoignage Certain etc.*, p. 8.

² Laffemas, *Lettres et Exemples etc.*, p. 136; *Le plaisir de la noblesse etc.*, p. 6; *La ruine et disette d'argent commune etc.*, p. 5; and *Le Tesmoignage Certain etc.*, pp. 7-8.

³ Laffemas, *Lettres et Exemples etc.*, pp. 128-129.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 134.

Laffemas is aware that the establishment of silk manufactures is bound to meet with opposition from the merchants who deal in the imported article. But he relies on their patriotism:

“To establish and manufacture silks it is necessary to show the merchants the future benefit for their children and for their fatherland [*patrie*] . . . because they can not deny that a profit of ten thousand *écus* on manufactures made in France brings them more gain than twenty thousand *écus* on manufactures of Italy, England and other countries.”¹ “Each pound of velvet, Genoese satin or other such stuff comes into France at nine or ten *écus* of which nearly two thirds goes to the manufacturers, which shows clearly that we must establish them [silk manufactures] for the good of this state.”²

The auguries for the success of the silk industry in France are good. For the silks which have already been manufactured there are of the very highest quality. They are better than those of Sicily.³ They are as good as those of China, Spain, or Italy.⁴ They are so fine

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 124.

² *Ibid.*, p. 176. Laffemas says that the argument that the king would lose 400,000 *écus* a year in customs duties were Italian silks shut out would not fool “the dumb, the blind, or infants in their cradles,” see *Responce à Messieurs de Lyon etc.*, p. 5.

³ Laffemas, *Les discours d'une liberté générale etc.*, p. 6.

⁴ Laffemas, *La ruine et disette d'argent commune etc.*, p. 5. Cf. *Lettres et Exemples etc.*, p. 134.

He indignantly denies the allegation of the merchants of Lyons that Italian silks are better, prettier and cheaper; see *Responce à Messieurs de Lyon etc.*, pp. 3-4.

that when some were presented to the king he declared himself thoroughly satisfied with them.¹

This propagandist for silk holds out high hopes that once the culture and manufacture are under way, France will be able to produce not only enough silk to supply her own needs, but even a surplus for export to foreign lands, reversing thus the existing situation, in that treasure would be brought into, not taken out of France by silk.²

Foreigners

Although it is the other countries of Europe who are "ravaging France of her treasures" by means of commerce and manufactures, Laffemas' attitude toward the citizens of those lands is not untinged with cosmopolitanism. He does not dislike foreigners *qua* foreigners. In fact he urges that foreign skilled workers be brought into France and granted easy naturalization that they may aid in building up her industries.³ But toward foreign merchants he is not too friendly. Since they are wont to grow rich on fraud and trickery,⁴ he thinks it would be well if they were all registered and had to get permits to carry on business,⁵ and he is sure that the management of all large commercial enterprises should be entrusted not to them

¹ Laffemas, *Lettres et Exemples etc.*, p. 131.

² *Ibid.*, p. 131; *Le plaisir de la noblesse etc.*, p. 3; *Preuve du plant et profit etc.*, p. 4; *La ruine et disette d'argent qu'ont apporté etc.*, p. 7.

³ Laffemas, *Comme l'on doit permettre etc.*, p. 8; *Reiglement Général etc.*, p. 32; *La Commission, Édit etc.*, p. XXXI.

⁴ Laffemas, *Remonstrances Politiques etc.*, p. 5.

⁵ Laffemas, *Reiglement Général etc.*, pp. 25, 34.

but to "native-born Frenchmen."¹ In enforcing the laws he feels that Frenchmen should be preferred to foreigners² and in one of his quatrains he ventures the opinion that the foreigners are "spoiling" France.³ But on the whole he shows little of the virulent animosity that so characterized Montchrétien.

There are two fields, however, in which he thinks that foreigners need strict limitation. One is the financial trickery in connection with bills of exchange and in rediscounting commercial paper. The other is fraudulent bankruptcies. Both are, to Laffemas, crying evils, and he feels that, in general, foreigners are more guilty than native-born citizens. But as the measures are to be directed against both classes of offenders, his strictures on these counts can hardly be considered as clear evidence of an anti-foreign bias.⁴

The Commission of Commerce

The chief practical expression of Laffemas' economic theories is to be found in the work of the Commission of Commerce in the foundation of which he was the moving spirit. The letters patent of the king creating the commission were dated from Fontainebleau, the thirteenth of April, 1601. They empowered the commission to examine the "remonstrances" in the

¹ Laffemas, *Comme l'on doit permettre etc.*, p. 7.

² Laffemas, *La Commission, Édit etc.*, p. XXIV.

³ Laffemas, *Les discours d'une liberté générale etc.*, p. 5.

⁴ Laffemas, *Advertissement et Responce etc.*, p. 6; *Advertissement sur les divers crimes etc.*, pp. 1, 3, 4, 9, 10, etc.; *Les discours d'une liberté générale etc.*, pp. 8-9; *Responce à Messieurs de Lyon etc.*, p. 10; *Les Trésors et Richesses etc.*, p. 5; *La Commission, Édit etc.*, pp. XXIV-XXVIII.

form of an edict, and other *mémoires* by "our dear and well loved Barthélemy de Laffemas, *dit Beausemblant*, one of our valets de chambre," and likewise to investigate questions of commerce, taxation and finance.¹

That the commission was not viewed as unimportant is indicated by the comparatively high position of the men who were chosen to compose it. Twelve members came from the various *Parlements*, and two from the *Chambre des Comptes*. Boissonnade terms them men of "recognized administrative experience."²

The register of the meetings of the commission from the seventeenth of August, 1602, to the twenty-sixth of October, 1604, has been preserved and published in the series of *Documents Inédits*.³ This register shows that the commissioners held more than a hundred and fifty meetings, delved into every sort of commercial and industrial question, interviewed inventors, workmen, entrepreneurs, made recommendations to the king, set large undertakings going, and approved or disapproved a considerable number of ventures.⁴

For the purposes of this study the work of the com-

¹ *La Commission, Édit etc.*, pp. XIII, XIV. The full title of the body was the "Commission consultative sur le fait du commerce général et de l'établissement des manufactures."

² Boissonnade, *Le socialisme d'état*, p. 171.

³ Laffemas, *Recueil présenté au Roy de ce qui se passe en l'assemblée du commerce au palais à Paris* is also reprinted here. It is valuable in that it shows what Laffemas thought had been accomplished.

⁴ *La Commission, Édit. etc.*, pp. 6-282.

Boissonnade points out that the Commission did not cease to function after 1604 but continued its activities to the end of the reign of Henry IV, and that it did not die under Louis XIII but was transformed into a new body the *Chambre Générale du Commerce*—see *Le socialisme d'état*, pp. 171-172.

mission is important chiefly because it was in part an effort to put into practice some of the theories of Laffemas. The basis on which it set to work was that of examining the "*Remonstrance*" in the form of an edict which Laffemas had drawn up, a work which contains what is, perhaps, the most complete expression of his ideas.¹ In the acts of the commission and in their words the influence of the king's tailor was clearly discernible.

Perhaps the most important endeavor of the commission was the effort to establish silk culture in France, an undertaking, than which nothing could have been more in line with the theories of Laffemas. In the meetings of the commission, silk, silk manufactures or culture were topics brought up and discussed nearly a hundred times, while no other question received attention more than twenty-five times.² The commission had hardly been sitting two months before it entered into a contract with two merchants of Paris by which the culture of silk was to be established in four districts.

These merchants undertook to supply the districts of Paris, Orléans, Tours, and Lyons with mulberry seed and trees and silk worms. The work was to be done by parishes and teachers were to be sent to instruct the people as to how to raise mulberries, how to tend the silk worms and the like. The merchants agreed furthermore to buy all the raw silk which was pro-

¹ It is printed as part of *La Commission, Édit etc.*, pp. XV-XLIII.

² *La Commission, Édit, etc.*

duced. The contract was to run for a period of six years.¹

The Council of State, in behalf of the king, approved and ratified this agreement on the grounds that it would "prevent the export of gold and silver which went on "continually for the purchase of silks", "recognizing that the introduction of silk in the lands" owing obedience to the king was "the most suitable remedy to avoid the export of this money, and desirable besides for the public adornment [*décoration publique*] and to enrich and employ the people."² To Laffemas was entrusted the administration of this contract by the commission which created him *Contrôleur général du commerce*. Laffemas was chosen, declared the king, from a wish "to recognize the long service done for us . . . for forty years and particularly the labor and expense he has endured in working out his *mémoires* on the condition of commerce"; and because the king desired nothing more earnestly than "the reëstablishment of commerce which the wars have quite interrupted and altered"; and because it was Laffemas who had found the method "of establishing throughout our realm the means of planting and growing mulberry trees in it, with the art of making silk there, and manufacturing it into all sorts of products and cloths without going any more to seek outside of this kingdom such a great quantity of material and of silk cloths, which causes great want and lack of gold

¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 10-22.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 22-23; see also pp. 9, and 27-29.

and silver, which is transported out of France to buy these goods."¹

It must have been a happy day for the Huguenot valet de chambre when he held in his hand the commission which gave him not only a position of power but also control over a project most dear to his heart. But the way ahead was not easy. The merchants had been forced to post bonds for the fulfillment of their part of the contract.² Only a few weeks had passed before they appealed to the king concerning the difficulty of securing the requisite four hundred thousand mulberry trees, five hundred pounds of mulberry seed, and the silk worm eggs. The king, however, advised doubtless by Laffemas, insisted on the carrying out of the terms that had been agreed on.³ The merchants apparently did fulfill some of the obligations of the contract for the first year.⁴ But as time went on the difficulties grew⁵ and though a good deal to encourage silk culture was probably accomplished, still it was as nothing in comparison with the wishes of Laffemas, and as late as 1608 he was still urging the necessity of planting mulberries and raising silk.⁶

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 31.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 35-36.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 41-42.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 146.

⁵ The merchants pointed out that they had great difficulty in getting the people to take the mulberries or the silk worms, see *La Commission, Édit etc.*, pp. 80, 87, etc.

⁶ Laffemas, *La ruine et disette d'argent qu'ont apporté etc.*, p. 3 ff.

That the king endeavored to support Laffemas in his endeavors is shown by a royal *Mandement* of December 7, 1602 (just two months after the contract with the entrepreneurs was made). In

A few samples of the other activities of the commission will serve to indicate the kind of business with which it was engaged. The question of the treatment of foreign merchants was brought up and a committee appointed to investigate it.¹ After careful deliberation the committee made a number of recommendations. They felt that foreign merchants should be allowed to establish themselves in Paris and other cities for three years after the date of the edict regulating the matter. They should be allowed to buy and sell (on their own account, not as agents) all sorts of non-manufactured goods whether domestic or foreign, all sorts of French manufactures, all sorts of foreign manufactures not made in France such as those of cotton, chamois, ebony, ivory and the like. They must not, however, trade in foreign silks, woolens or linens, save that Dutch linens might be imported for three years, while the manufacture was being established in

this document the king was obviously endeavoring to help the entrepreneurs carry out the contract by providing local machinery to help them. Each parish for instance was required to elect an individual to assist in the distribution and planting of mulberries. See Isambert, Vol. XV, pp. 278-282.

As late as 1605 Henry IV had not given up all hope for the mulberry project; for on November 16 of that year he issued a royal *Déclaration* aimed particularly at the clergy, urging co-operation with the still struggling entrepreneurs. Peculiarly enough this declaration applied to all France; each diocese was to have established in it a nursery of fifty thousand mulberries from which seeds and small trees were to be distributed to ecclesiastics, gentlemen and others. See Isambert, Vol. XV, pp. 291-294. A remarkably good account of the silk culture experiment is to be found in the articles by Fagniez in the *Rev. Hist.*, Vol. 23. See also, Poirson, *Histoire du règne de Henri IV*, Vol. III, ch. 5.

¹ *La Commission, Édit etc.*, pp. 24-25.

France. As to manufactures, the foreigners were to be permitted to carry on all kinds; if the processes were unknown in France, they would be subject to no regulations; if the processes already existed in France they would be liable to the same rules as the French. To secure these privileges foreigners were to take out special papers of naturalization, which would be granted to an individual when he was actually settled in a French city with his family and considerable property. Ten years after the granting of such papers the foreigner was to have all the rights of a Frenchman save that he could not leave France or take his property out of the country.¹

The establishment of horse breeding occupied considerable of the commissioners' time, especially as they found that the purchase of horses was the cause of a very large "export of gold and silver" and was ruining the nobility.² The matter was called to the attention of the king and he commended their efforts to establish stud farms, saying in part,—"Among the things that we have recognized as causing a great decrease in the gold and silver in our kingdom is the export that is made to the Germans and other foreigners who bring [hither] horses in great numbers." . . . Better horse breeding "can make a great saving for our subjects and keep the foreigners from enriching themselves at their [the subjects] expense and taking out such a great quantity of gold and silver as they do through the sale of their horses."³

¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 60-62.

² *Ibid.*, p. 85. This topic is brought up more than twenty times.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 198.

Two Rouen merchants, Jehan de Vuolff and Anthoine Lambert, petitioned the commission for a grant of privileges to enable them to manufacture linen in the styles of Flanders and Brabant. They wished for a loan of ten thousand *écus*; naturalization for themselves and their workers; permission to export fifty thousand *écus* a year to buy materials, thread and the like; to build a beer parlor for their workers which should not be subject to the regulations of Rouen; to have salt without paying the *gabelles*; exemption from the *tailles* for their workers; and freedom from the jurisdiction of the guild and municipal authorities of Rouen. They did not care whether imports of linen were forbidden or not as they were confident that the quality and prices of their products would stand any comparison, especially since materials and provisions were cheaper in France than in the Low Countries. They pointed out that the Dutch product was prohibited in Spain, thus creating a great opportunity for France. As for the home market, they were sure that when French merchants learned that linens made in the country were just as good as those made in foreign countries, they would "prefer to supply themselves here," instead of exporting "their money out of the kingdom by means of letters of credit and otherwise," by which money was "taken out of France." If their requests were heeded, foreigners would "come to buy these manufactures so that France would be filled with gold and silver," and the king would "get money from export taxes."¹ The opinion of the commission was that it would be "greatly useful to the public as much

¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 242-245.

for the increase of commerce as for the enrichment of the kingdom" to have this manufacture established. They, therefore, urged that the requests of the petitioners be granted, with some modifications, the chief of which was that half the workers employed were to be French.¹

The commissioners interested themselves likewise in another kind of textile, fustians. They prevailed upon the king to send new regulations for this cloth to the Bailly of Rouen. In his missive the king said that something would have to be done since:

"the workers . . . and those who employ them, caring more for their own gain than for the public good, do not sell them [the fustians] as they ought to be either in length and width or in workmanship and inner worth, and in addition, and they have not the skill to finish and dye them like those which are finished in foreign countries and principally in England; because of which it is to be feared that the French scorning them altogether will have recourse to foreigners and that thus this manufacture will be abandoned."

But if foreign imports were forbidden, and if proper regulations were established, "the merchandise being well and loyally made" the French would not have any reason to abandon it, and "some of the foreigners even" might be tempted "to get it in France."²

By the commission it was suggested to the king that a certain de Rozan be granted a monopoly of the making of gilt leather hangings. This entrepreneur

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 245 ff.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 167-168.

guaranteed to manufacture the article in the same perfection as the product of Spain and other foreign countries. It was worth while to establish manufactures of which the use was "quite common in France as much for their beauty as for their moderate price." It would, therefore, "be expedient, and profitable for the public, to prevent the export of gold and silver out of France for the purchase" of such hangings. The manufacturer was, however, to be required to employ as many French as foreign apprentices.¹

The question of apprentices intrigued the commission, and they brought pressure to bear on foreign manufacturers already established in France to employ young Frenchmen so that the secrets of the various trades might pass into native hands. A master worker in Flemish tapestries when approached on this subject agreed to employ some French youths "for his own profit," "recognizing that such" was "the will of the king."² But an Italian glass-maker tried to refuse to comply with the wishes of the commission on the ground that his loyalty to the Prince of Mantua prevented it, and that all his workers would leave him if he thus broke his oath.³ A Flemish tie-maker was more amenable, for he not only agreed to employ French apprentices but said he was glad to do so.⁴

As an example of the grandiose schemes that were in the air at this period of industrial optimism, that of

¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 172-173.

² *Ibid.*, p. 197.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 195, 208. His refusal is twice recorded but apparently he had to give in, in the end.

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 195-196.

a certain de Barthélemy may be given. He wished to establish in Provence manufactures of gold, silver, silk, wool, linen, and cotton in the styles of Italy, Spain, Turkey and the Levant. He planned to produce all sorts of velvets, satins, damasks and taffetas, cloth of gold, cloth of silver, linens, silk stockings, Cairo carpets, Persian and Alexandrian rugs, Levant tapestries, various cotton fabrics, etc., etc. The commission took his plans quite seriously and recommended the grant of numerous privileges to him, but decided that at first he should limit himself to eighteen workshops, six at Arles, six at Aix, and six at Marseilles.¹

While questions of manufacturing received so much attention, commerce was not ignored. The commission, for instance, devoted a great deal of time to the question of improving navigation on the river Oise. If this river were made navigable, a large number of towns could trade with Paris, instead of being "forced to trade and do business with foreigners, a thing which often alienates and alters the allegiance and loyalty of subjects by which they are bound to their prince, and diminishes greatly the friendship which they owe to their compatriots and neighbors."² The subject of navigation on the Terrin,³ and the project of a canal between the two seas were considered.⁴ A *mémoire* from Laffemas recommending that four war vessels

¹ *La Commission, Édit etc.*, pp. 207-225.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 37, 181, etc. This subject was brought up more than ten times.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 241.

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 182-183. This was in April, 1604. The plan had been suggested by a merchant of Toulouse. Colbert was later to take up the idea ardently, and to carry it to a successful conclusion.

be built and equipped "to maintain and defend French merchants who desire to trade in foreign lands" was likewise taken up.¹

Agricultural improvements received but little attention, for in addition to horse breeding, the only topic which was brought up with any frequency was that of how to raise rice.² But mechanical inventions and improved industrial processes occupied a large part of the commission's time. Lead pipe that needed no solder,³ new steel making methods,⁴ ways of producing white lead,⁵ the possibility of making cloth from mulberry bark,⁶ mills for beating copper,⁷ machines to lift loaded boats,⁸ water mills to run in still water,⁹ new spinning machines,¹⁰ all these and many others were discussed with more or less care.

But after the question of silk culture, the subject to which the most time was devoted was how to establish in France various manufactures not then made there. The mere listing of the goods France wished to produce for herself is significant. They include: Milan gold thread, Piedmont steel, Turkish carpets, Bruges satins, Flemish tiles, Italian glass, Flemish tapestries, English fustians, Venetian crystal glass, Persian and Egyptian rugs, Levant tapestries, linens of Flanders and Brabant,

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 202.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 38-39, etc.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 56.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 59.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 67, etc.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 119. It was Olivier de Serres who fathered this idea.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 224.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 257.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 256.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 274.

and so on. In general the commission was intensely interested in making France as self-sufficient as possible, and as a means to this end the prohibition of foreign textiles seemed to it advisable, just and necessary.¹

The commission, considering as it did all sorts of topics, from how to keep the streets of Paris clean, to how a certain Chabot was raising his silk worms, and from beer parlors for workers to the adulteration of wine, varied between the magnificent and the humorously pathetic. But it was always imbued with the deep patriotism of its inspirer, Laffemas. It sought the welfare of France by establishing manufactures, aiding commerce and keeping gold and silver in the country.

Ephemeral in part, permanent in part, was the work of these commissioners. In 1604, Laffemas writing in an optimistic vein listed their achievements. He made three lists. Of these the first was, "what has been considered by the commissioners, . . . decreed by the gentlemen of the Council, and put into effect."² In this first category he included the planting of mulberries, and the establishment of silk culture and all sorts of manufactures "which the French were forced to seek outside the realm, and for this purpose to export more than six million *écus* each year without the return of any goods or commodities except musk, perfumes, feminine luxuries and all sorts of poisons of the body and of the spirit."³ The culture of silk was beginning to flourish, but the manufacture of it must be encouraged lest it be necessary to buy the fabrics "at excessive

¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 74, 85, 105, etc.

² Laffemas, *Recueil etc.*, p. 221.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 221.

prices from the foreigners.”¹ On this first list, likewise, were to be found: the manufacture of Bologna crêpes, of Milan gold thread, of gilt leather hangings, of fine iron products, of better steel, the regulation of silk and wool stocking making, the forcing of French apprentices upon Italian glass and Flemish tapestry workers, the manufacture of white lead, and of better lead pipes, the introduction of an improved flour mill, and the improvement of fishing conditions in the Seine.²

The second list comprised those subjects considered and approved by the commissioners but not yet decreed by the Council of State, or put into effect. In this group were to be found: the extension of silk culture especially to Normandy “that this rich and precious manna might be more universally spread over France”; the establishment of silk manufactures in the district of Forestz (near Lyons), and in Provence; measures against bankruptcies; the production of Turkish and Persian rugs in Paris; the manufacture of Bruges satins at Troyes; the replacing of English fustians by French; the manufacture of Dutch linens; the policing of Paris; street cleaning in Paris and other cities; and regulation of the price of food.³

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 222.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 223-227.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 228-234.

The linen project seems to appeal especially to Laffemas, for he mentions the high prices and adds:

“We are forced to buy them from foreign lands whither is taken a large quantity of gold and silver, although we have an abundance of flax and of the other chief materials in France, more indeed than the foreigners who come to get and buy them from us to manufacture and straightway resell to us, gaining thus fourfold and more.” *Recueil etc.*, p. 233.

The third list was composed of propositions received and examined by the commissioners but not yet considered. It included: horse breeding, regulation of the textile and dyeing industries, an invention whereby children and blind people could spin, a reform of Paris trades and crafts, a canal from the Ocean to the Mediterranean, navigation on the Oise, the employment of criminals in a new way in row and sail boats on the Seine, a new water mill, improvement of the iron industry, rice growing, and prevention of the adulteration of wine.¹

Laffemas' attitude toward the commission at the height of its activity was one of hope. It had done great things, it had great things before it. It was and was to be an important instrument in the economic recovery of France.

Isaac de Laffemas

Isaac de Laffemas, c. 1587-1657, was the most distinguished son of Barthélemy. A dabbler in literature and something of a rake at first, he eventually became interested in politics and finished his career as a tool in the skillful hands of Richelieu. At one time he appar-

¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 235-243.

Laffemas remarks in connection with the iron industry:

"France abounds in iron mines and works. . . . Nevertheless, they have so decayed since the first troubles that the trade in iron is so diminished that we are forced to get iron from Germany and other countries instead of sending it to them." *Recueil etc.*, p. 241.

Laffemas says of rice "which is a manna from heaven," that it is "very expensive in France . . . and we have to send our money to foreigners to get it." *Ibid.*, p. 241.

ently planned to follow in the paternal footsteps,¹ and as a first move in this direction he published in 1606 *L'Histoire du Commerce de France*.² This work is interesting largely because it is a restatement of the ideas of his paternal parent mingled with unstinted praise of his father and of Henry IV.

Isaac's *Histoire* begins by stating the value of and need for silk culture. He regrets that it is not better established but is optimistic about the future. He approves of royal aid to manufactures and points with pride to "those haughty buildings of the Place Royale of which the appearance threatens with ruin the foreigners who live by despoiling us and in which the mere battery of the machines that our French have set up has frightened a whole country."³

Henry IV is, according to Isaac, the source of all the benefits France has received. Heaven "has favored my father," writes the son, "in having let him live during your reign." Henry has chosen the Commission of Commerce so well that "the foreigners have as much reason to admire you as to fear you." How wise has the king been in endeavoring to reestablish the business of the kingdom "which without commerce and trade would be as poor and needy as it was before Your Majesty restored it." With Henry's aid the cloth industries are making "the best fabrics of the world"; he has

¹ This is rendered probable by the fact that the commission appointing Barthélemy *Contrôleur Général du Commerce* promised the succession of the office to his son. See *La Commission, Édit etc.*, p. 31.

² The title is a trifle misleading, the work is not a history nor does it deal very extensively with the subject of commerce.

³ I. de Laffemas, *L'Histoire du Commerce*, pp. 411-412. The "haughty buildings" were workshops established by royal aid.

caused them to "take up the shuttle as harmful to foreigners as the sword."¹

Like his father, Isaac wishes to see silk, cotton, and wool manufactures established and carefully regulated. He insists that France is able to supply herself and should do so.² For this end he feels high standards of quality are necessary. "Honesty," he says, "should have been preserved in everything fashioned or made in France, so that the foreigner would not have gotten this advantage over us, of having people go to him for what we ourselves can manufacture."³ If proper care were taken the day would come soon, he is sure, when France would have everything necessary to provide for herself and enough to send out to foreigners.⁴

As for commerce, Isaac thinks that it is merely a question of morale and initiative. Great things are to be expected when the French merchants realize their true worth and begin "to esteem themselves and to show to foreigners the greatness of their courage."⁵ With relish he relates the story of a French merchant and an Italian noble who fell into an argument over the price of some goods. The Frenchman offered to play for the sum in question, whereupon the Italian pointed to the difference in their ranks as a barrier to a friendly game. The Frenchman, his anger aroused, replied, "If the gentlemen are merchants in your country, here the merchants are gentlemen."⁶

¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 413-415.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 415-419.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 420.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 428.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 423.

⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 422-423.

Nor is agriculture ignored by this budding publicist. Horse breeding, for instance, catches his attention :

"I believe that people are not unaware of the money which is sent to Turkey, Spain, Italy, England, Germany and other places to purchase horses ; and that the establishment of horse breeding in France is as necessary to save our finances as any of those things which I have proposed. . . . We can prevent it entirely, getting along without [their] horses as well as without other things."¹

Then too, France is so well provided with grain and wines that the export of these products alone should render her rich and "moneyed" (*argenteuse*) in a short time.² In fact the fertility of France is so remarkable that it is not to be compared with those tropical lands which have two crops a year. For France produces more in one crop than any other similar area can in two. In fact, remarks Isaac, "it seems that nature has wished to favor her [France] with all the most precious things she had in her gift, that she might get along without other nations."

All in all *L'Histoire du Commerce* adds nothing to the works of the author's father. Isaac repeats a number of Barthélemy's ideas, tosses in courtier-like praises of the king, and seasons the mixture with rosy prophecies. The book is superficial and is an improvement on the paternal pamphlets merely in style, and that only if flowery elegance be preferred to rugged crudity.

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 420.

² *Ibid.*, p. 429.

The System of Laffemas

In summing up the works of Barthélemy de Laffemas it is hard not to be prejudiced in favor of this sturdy Huguenot who gave himself to the unaccustomed pursuit of the literary muse, not from inclination, but because he felt that France must be stirred from her lethargy. His ideas were in large part practicable and derived not only from the theories made current in the sixteenth century but also from his own experience and observation. Only when he visioned immediate results flowing from the application of his ideas, wholesale reforms put into effect without a hitch, or changes in the habits of a people following close upon a royal edict, did he assume the rôle of a dreamer.

Laffemas did not ignore the value of agriculture. It was to him an important resource of his native land. But commerce was more important. Through it gold and silver entered or left a country. It must, therefore, be regulated so as to prevent foreign exploitation of France. Abuses whether by citizens or foreigners must be eliminated. But of all things it was most necessary to establish manufactures. It was by the purchase of foreign manufactures that the treasures of France were being exhausted. With all her resources, with her intelligent and numerous population it was criminal for the country not to be entirely self-sufficient in regard to manufactured products. This was particularly true of luxury articles. France was selling her birthright, wealth, for pearls, cloth of gold, and, above all, silks. Yet France was peculiarly adapted to the production and manufacture of silk. The anomaly was striking.

Laffemas devoted every effort to establishing silk culture and manufacture in France. He wrote; he urged; he argued; he employed his position as *Contrôleur Général du Commerce*. He encouraged his *Commission du Commerce*; he used his influence with the king, all for the establishment of silk culture and of silk and other manufactures in France.

His reasoning was clear, his premises were simple. Gold and silver were important elements in the wealth of a nation. They could be obtained from trade. But commerce as it then existed was taking gold and silver out of France. Why? Because France was buying manufactured products, and above all silks. France must, therefore, cease to buy these articles, but then she must make them for herself. That meant that she must establish manufactures of all sorts. But even if she did so, for one important material, raw silk, she would be dependent on foreigners. France must then establish the culture of silk. Manufactures could not establish themselves. They must be aided by the king. In particular, foreign manufactures must be shut out to preserve the home market for nascent industries. Once these had supplied the needs of France they could sell abroad and bring in a stream of treasure. The prohibition of the export of raw materials would assure a sufficiency to the domestic factories and workshops. It was all very simple; it was all, likewise, very mercantilist. The ideas of Laffemas were not, for the most part, new; but he brought together a large number of earlier concepts and emphasized their inter-relation.

It is difficult to evaluate the success of Laffemas' efforts. But some facts are clear. He paved the way for

the titanic efforts of Colbert. He disseminated his own ideas in a fairly large and important circle. He accomplished something at least toward the early industrialization of France. It is almost impossible to deny him the rank of the first great mercantilist minister of France, and not to see in him the Colbert of the reign of Henry IV.

CHAPTER III

THE SYSTEM OF MONTCHRÉTIEN

Poet, economist, dueller, rebel, dramatist, merchant, Antoine de Montchrétien was a more picturesque figure than his contemporary, Barthélemy de Laffemas. It is, however, more difficult to understand him, for not only was he unstable and erratic instead of being simple and direct, but also the facts known concerning his life are obscure and few. He was born, probably in Normandy, in 1575 or 1576.¹ Of his father, whose rendering of the family name as Mauchrétien was somewhat less aristocratic in flavor, little is known save that he resided in Falaise and was, perhaps, an apothecary by profession.

Antoine went to school at Caen, where in the company of young gentlemen he learned the ways and manners of the upper levels of society. At the age of twenty he began to write poetry and tragedies, of which some, *Hector* and *L'Écossaise*,² for instance, are still read by students of French literature. Embroiled in a duelling

¹ This date is derived from the portrait of Montchrétien in the first edition of his works, published in 1601, which bears the inscription *Aet. XXV.*

² The list of his tragedies includes: *L'Écossaise*, *Les Lacènes*, *David*, *Aman*, *Sophonisbe* or *la Carthaginoise*, *Hector*.

scrape in 1605,¹ Montchrétien fled to England. After having traveled in Holland he returned to France about 1610 and married a rich Norman widow who set him up in the hardware business. At Ousonne sur Loire he established a factory in which knives, lancets, and scythes were made.

In 1615 appeared his only work on economics, the *Traicté de l'Économie Politique*, dedicated to the king, Louis XIII, and to his mother, Marie de Medici. By the title of this book its author is assured a certain fame and immortality, for it is the first known use of the phrase "political economy."²

Various phrases in this *Traicté* seem to indicate that Montchrétien was a Catholic, especially a passage in which he speaks of the English and Dutch as "heretics."³ But in 1621, he took part in raising a Huguenot revolt in Normandy, and was killed at Tourailles on October 8. Four days later his body was condemned by a judicial tribunal to be dragged on the ground, broken, burnt to ashes and scattered to the winds. Before his death Montchrétien had graduated into the ranks of the nobles in the free and easy fashion of the

¹ This date has been established by M. Funck-Brentano, see p. 10 of his introduction to his reédition of the "*Traicté de l'Économie Politique*."

² In the "*Privilège de Roy*" the book is described as *Traicté Économique du Trafic*. The more famous title was perhaps a happy last moment inspiration.

³ *Traicté de l'Économie Politique*, new edition, with introduction and notes by Th. Funck-Brentano, (Paris, 1889), p. 213. This is the edition used in this study and it will be cited henceforth merely as the *Traicté*. For another passage tending to show that Montchrétien was a Catholic, see p. 322.

day, for he was styling himself "Sieur de Vaterville."¹

The *Traicté* is not a methodical disquisition on economic theories after the fashion of nineteenth century writers, but rather a rambling, discursive treatment of various phases of business, commerce and government. The book is a weird mixture of naïveté with insight, of classical allusion with current events, of florid rhetoric with matter of fact statement. In certain sections the author leans upon previous writers like Bodin, B. de Laffemas, and Nicolas de Montant to the point of outright plagiarism.² But taken as a whole the work reflects clearly certain currents of early seventeenth century thought, among them, nascent mercantilism. Montchrétien divides his work into four parts, on manufactures, commerce, navigation, and the chief duties of a prince. In analyzing the book in this study, however, a division, somewhat different, will be employed.

The Wealth of France

To Montchrétien it seems that the wealth of a nation depends on four factors, favorable situation, abundant

¹ The facts of Montchrétien's life have been derived from the introduction to the *Traicté* by Funck-Brentano, and from the *Mémoire sur Antoine de Montchrétien* by Jules Duval.

² See Ashley's review of Funck-Brentano's edition of the *Traicté*, in the English *Historical Review* for October, 1891, and Funck-Brentano's own note on p. 265. Various judgments have been passed on the merits of the book as a whole. M. Funck-Brentano sees it as the work in which political economy sprung full-armed into life. Other scholars like M. Jules Duval are more temperate. Still others, like Ashley, impressed by the contradictions, obscurities and borrowings of Montchrétien, come close to considering it as a piece of overrated trash.

natural resources, a large and industrious population, and very careful regulation of the use of the first three. In patriotic eulogy he thus sums up the riches of France:

"Your Majesties¹ possess a great state, agreeable in geographic situation, abounding in wealth, flourishing in peoples, powerful in good and strong cities, invincible in arms, triumphant in glory. The extent of its land is sufficient for the infinite number of its inhabitants, its fertility for their support, its wealth of domestic animals for their clothing; for the maintenance of their health and happiness they have gentle skies, balmy air, sweet waters. For their defence and housing there are materials suitable and fit for building houses and fortifications. If it is a cause of extreme happiness to your peoples that they are born and raised in France, that is to say in the most beautiful, freest and happiest clime on earth, your glory should be no less than that in it you rule an Empire that can rightly be called incomparable. Because France alone can do without everything that she gets from neighboring lands, while they can not dispense with her. She has infinite wealth, known, and yet to be discovered. Whoever will consider her carefully [will realize that] she is the most complete unit of a kingdom [*corps de royaume*] that the sun shines upon from its rising to its setting, of which the parts are so varied and yet so well suited to each other in that symmetry necessary for a fine state. In every one of her provinces are sites where all sorts of beautiful and useful trades can be established. By herself she can be a whole world. The least of the provinces of France furnishes your Majesties with its grains, its wines, its salt, its linens, its woolens, its

¹ I.e., Louis XIII and Marie de Medici, his mother.

iron, its oil, its dye,¹ making France richer than all the Perus in the world. . . . But of these great riches the greatest is the inexhaustible abundance of its men, who know how to husband its wealth; because they are noble in mind, active and possessed of a flame-like intelligence restrained by a clever and cultured nature capable of thought and deed.”²

This discourse is not to be taken as paradoxical, insists Montchrétien, although France may seem to be overcrowded with men. Such a condition is due merely to lack of good regulation. The number of inhabitants, “her greatest good, through ignorance or neglect to employ them becomes her greatest evil. . . . Order is the entelechy of states.”³ “One thing alone you lack, Oh mighty state,” apostrophizes the author, “knowledge of yourself and of how to employ your strength.”⁴

In regard to the geographic situation of France two features seem particularly striking to the author. First, that the climate is temperate with all the concomitant advantages. Second, that the two seas on which France abuts are like great highways to lead the French forth into world commerce.⁵

The natural resources of France are so great that they seem to Montchrétien to point the way to national self-sufficiency.

¹ Whenever Montchrétien speaks of the dye produced by France he is referring to woad, a blue vegetable coloring matter later superseded by indigo.

² *Traicté*, pp. 23-24.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 24-25.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 34.

⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 276, 304.

"Your towns [he tells the king] are cities; your cities, provinces; your provinces, kingdoms; . . . everything that can be imported from all parts of the world (I except only spices, and we have salt which is worth more) is found in each one of them in sufficiency and in all, through their easy communication with each other, very abundantly. In a word, France is a world. Who has seen her has seen everything there is to see, seas, rivers, swamps, mountains, forests, fields. There is nothing missing but deserts. Because the Landes¹ even might be made into fertile areas."²

The agricultural resources are particularly important to Montchrétien. Elaborating a passage³ from Bodin's *Republic*, he terms wheat, wine, salt, linens, and woolens "five inexhaustible fountains of natural wealth." "Instead of becoming empty in a few years . . . like foreign mines, these endure and renew themselves every year." The foreigner goes into the bowels of the earth to seek precious metals only "to bring them to us so that he may take away in exchange the aforementioned things which are absolutely necessary to human life."⁴

But above all France is rich in her large population. "There are more merchants in France . . . than there are men in any other kingdom."⁵ Montchrétien points out to the king the military advantage of this manpower. "You have this advantage, Sire, that no other

¹ A portion of Gascony composed largely of sandy plains.

² *Traicté*, p. 147.

³ Bodin, *Les six livres de la république*, p. 876.

⁴ *Traicté*, pp. 239-240.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 34.

Prince has in like degree: that your France alone can flood and inundate the whole world with men; and what men, men invincible and irresistible in arms.”¹

Not mere numbers, however, but a busy, industrious, working population is the real criterion of natural wealth. “Man is born to live in continued activity and occupation.”² “The happiness of men . . . consists chiefly in wealth and wealth in work.”³ The life of contemplation and seclusion unless leavened by activity is “imperfect and possibly more harmful than useful to Commonwealths.”⁴ The greatest thing that can be done for a state “is not to allow any part of it to remain idle.”⁵ For idleness breeds evil and destroys the vigor of men and the chastity of women;⁶ it is a “disease fatal to rich and flourishing states.”⁷

France unfortunately is stricken with this plague of idleness:

“The majority of our men are forced to seek elsewhere a place of employment and work, some in Spain, some in England, some in Germany, some in Flanders. It is a source of continual astonishment to everyone how many others besides, roam among us, sound, strong in body, in the prime of life, but wandering here and there, night and day, with neither vocations nor homes. The squares of the cities, the highways, swarm with them, and their importunity takes from

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 275.

² *Ibid.*, p. 21.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 99.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 21.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 22.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 65.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 101.

the hands of charity what it used to grant only to an old, feeble and paralyzed indigence.¹

"It remains for the public to take care to employ the men in trades and undertakings which unite private profit with general utility. The man who really understands the question of administration is not he who by rigorous punishment extirpates robbers and thieves, but he, who by the employment which he gives to those who are entrusted to his care prevents them from becoming thieves and robbers—a thing which can be secured by setting up in each province of this kingdom several different workshops for various manufactures, according to what is suitable for the locality. And they, doubtless, will make fine nurseries for artisans, which will create great wealth for the country. And that, doubtless, will result in casting down a thousand wheels and gibbets."²

The real remedy for this seventeenth century unemployment question lies, according to Montchrétien, in following the example of the thriving Dutch towns. France should establish work schools for the children, and work houses for all the able-bodied jobless; and there are but few who are not capable of something. The unruly and criminal should be forced to work; the others will welcome the opportunity. As to the fear that such public establishments will compete with private industry, it is groundless. For they will merely supplement individual undertakings and cause work to be done in France which is being done abroad.³

Yet the geographic position, resources and large and

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 26.

² *Ibid.*, p. 27.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 101-108.

industrious population will be of little avail, if the economic activities of France are not subjected to careful royal regulation until some approach to the rather bourgeois ideal of "*bon ordre*" is achieved. "The most royal activity that Your Majesties can undertake," Montchrétien tells his sovereigns didactically, "is to set in order what has become disordered, to regulate and separate the trades which have fallen into a monstrous confusion, to reestablish trade and commerce so long interrupted."¹

The religious wars, in which the League and the three Henries had embroiled France were still close enough to make peace and order seem eminently desirable, when to these recollections were added the minor disturbances and the business depression which followed on the death of Henry IV. Montchrétien, therefore, drives home time and again his plea for regulation, order, and good management, often by literary figures:

"Among farmers it is not the one who has the most land who gets the most for his work, but he who knows best what is the natural quality of each bit of his soil, what seed is most suitable, and in what season it must be cultivated. The wealth of a state does not depend simply on its wide extent or the large number of its inhabitants, but on leaving no land uncultivated and on assigning wisely to everyone his duty."²

Thus through the pages of the *Traicté* can be glimpsed Montchrétien's dream picture of a prosperous

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 30.

² *Ibid.*, p. 31.

and wealthy France, of a France which uses every advantage of position and resources which Nature has bestowed, of a France where an industrious and happy people labor willingly under the thoughtful and careful regulation of an economically minded king.

Manufacturing

Of the support and aid that Montchrétien feels France needs from her rulers, perhaps the most important part is that which is to be devoted to her manufactures. Not by any means that agriculture is unimportant, or that commerce is to be neglected. Far from it. Industries are not as necessary to life as agriculture save as custom and use have made them so.¹ Farmers, artisans, and merchants are all vital for the well-being of the state.² The French peasants have been so badly treated that they have degenerated from their pristine worth. It should never be forgotten that they are the support of the state, for they feed the nobles and the cities.³

Still, civilization has rendered manufactured articles important enough to "deserve first rank in the state in regard to utility."⁴ So much so that self-sufficiency in manufactures is the ideal to be aimed at.

"Every society should be abundantly provided with them, and by itself. It should not get elsewhere what is necessary for it: because being able to have them only

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 45.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 32-33.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 40-44.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 46.

by the grace of others it makes itself feeble in so far as it is dependent. . . . There is nothing but necessity which should force people to get elsewhere what they have not. To provide themselves with all commodities no effort should be spared.”¹

To build up the manufactures in France because of their utility, and to render her self-sufficient are, then, Montchrétien’s aims. To achieve them the chief means is to remove all foreign competition in the home market. An ancillary method is to lessen luxury and display in dress and manner of living.

Montchrétien’s views on the subject of manufacturing are brought out in his treatment of the various industrial fields. The metal trades he holds to be the most important, for besides all its other uses metal has the military value of being the material for arms by which “the glory of this state has mounted to the skies, and its limits have been extended from one sea to the other.”² This fact shows that even the humble subject of manufacturing is well worth royal attention.³

France is capable of carrying on all kinds of metal crafts, and has five hundred thousand people who follow these vocations. But many of them are unemployed. Montchrétien wants, therefore, to “reinstate work in this kingdom and relegate idleness to foreigners.”⁴ For it is the foreign competition that is injuring France’s position. England, having taken advantage of the French civil wars, is carrying on the metal arts

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 46.

² *Ibid.*, p. 48.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*

"with glory and profit."¹ What was once the gain of France while she maintained her preëminent position in metal work, England now keeps to herself. "Worst of all she has learned the work from those Frenchmen who have emigrated thither. "Our men still living with her and their children are like trophies torn from us. It is to them alone that she owes the manufacture of all sorts of arms, guns, locks, cutlery."² Flanders and Holland, likewise, are the pupils of France. As for Germany where the metal trades are so flourishing, its products are no better than those of France, "except for the opinion which finds value in foreign things."³ But the French prefer foreign work and love nothing so well as what they are not acquainted with.⁴

"When one can do the work for oneself, should one let it be done by others? [inquires Montchrétien]. Is he economical who puts his hand in his purse to buy what he can gather from his own lands, who to cultivate the fields of others leaves his own barren, who having arms cannot find them to work with and turns to his neighbor? Your Majesties have enough men in this kingdom, as industrious as foreigners or more so. Give them an opportunity to show what they can do and they will accomplish marvels. This opportunity is to prevent their labors from being stifled any more by those of others, to assign to them on the contrary the whole manufacture of iron and steel, so that henceforth they should not merely live, which they barely manage to do now, but that they should live making a profit

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 49.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 50.

from their work, and this will doubtless have as a result the glory and the wealth of the state. Otherwise it cannot be doubted that if they continue in their failure to make profits,¹ these vital arts, already toilsome in themselves, will be abandoned in the future as fruitless, a thing which cannot happen without universal harm. Remedy it in time. Do not let the forge fire go out; it is easier to keep it burning than to rekindle it when it has died.”²

All ironware can be made in France, “to admit and receive it from abroad is to remove the means of subsistence from many thousands of your subjects whose heritage in this industry and whose source of income is this work; it is to decrease by so much your wealth, which is created and increased by that of your peoples; it is cutting the nerves of your state to seek to get by borrowing from others the instruments of its valor.”³ To let iron workers go elsewhere to teach their craft, is “cutting your throat with your own knife.”⁴ “Make us known for what we are, so that people will cease to think that rough and clumsy men have hands as skillful as ours, minds as ingenious, bodies as suited to toil, when on the contrary manufacturing is natural to us, industry normal, and labor agreeable.”⁵

Taking the specific instance of scythes, Montchrétien emphasizes his points :

¹ In the entire discussion of the metal trades, Montchrétien speaks very feelingly, perhaps because of his own venture in iron manufacturing.

² *Traité*, pp. 50-51.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 51.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 52.

⁵ *Ibid.*

"There is a great sale of scythes in this kingdom. Every year Germany uses almost all its hammers to forge them for us. Almost all of Lorraine,¹ imitates and seconds it in this work; both are attracted to it by the profit. And now what are our superior and more faithful artisans doing? They are out of work and growing weak with hunger. Is it because they do not know how to make this product? Nothing is further from the truth. Their tools sell for double. That is the trouble, people look for bargains and are pleased to find many of them."

The foreign scythes are of very inferior quality:

"Let our artisans be allowed to work as badly as the foreigners and they will make scythes as cheap. . . . Of the foreign products if one good one is found in six it is a lot. I am speaking of the better ones, as for the others scarcely two or three in a hundred. . . . Who going through the countryside does not hear the complaints of poor laborers cheated in their purchases?"²

"The remedy to stop such cheating and to keep in France more than eight hundred thousand livres which this commodity takes away every year,"³ is, according to Montchrétien, to build up and support French workshops and to shut out the foreign product. Such steps will not raise the price, since with "Germany and Lorraine no longer coming to spew forth [their scythes] in this kingdom it will be easy to reduce the price through the assurance of a market which in manufacturing is the chief and only consideration."⁴

¹ Lorraine was, of course, still a foreign area.

² *Traité*, pp. 52-54.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 54.

⁴ *Ibid.*

Montchrétien begs the king and the queen mother to restore the iron industry so that they may have the satisfaction of "seeing idleness driven from the shops with hammer blows, of seeing iron changed into gold" in the hands of the French, "rather than having the gold of France changed into iron by the fraud of foreigners."¹

When Montchrétien turns to a consideration of what he calls the five clothing trades, hat making, linen, wool and silk manufacture, and leather tanning, he finds a similar situation with luxury in dress as an added factor of aggravation. The shopkeeper is dressing like the gentleman, the humble man like the noble. It is no longer a question of being, but merely of appearing. If this luxurious display continues it will ruin the army, make the cities insolent, the men effeminate and the women immoral.²

In hat making, supremacy still rests with the French, because they originate the styles with such changeful rapidity, that their very inconstancy baffles the foreigners. But on the other hand, many hat makers are ruined by frauds in Spanish wool, which often comes into France filled with grease and sand. This can be remedied by careful inspection of imported wool, but it would be better to use only domestic wool, especially since that from Berry is better and softer than even the Spanish product.³

Linen is the most widespread manufacture in France. No other country has such good flax or such exquisite

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 58.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 60-61.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 62-63.

workmanship. The Dutch have, it is true, tried to copy the French. But Montchrétien claims that the barbarians, who always judge by the real worth of a product, prefer the French goods even when the Dutch imitate the French bundles and customs marks.¹

The wily Dutch, however, prevailed upon Henry IV, from whom they obtained permission and subsidies for establishing their linen manufacture in France, a thing which they were glad to do because the water and climate were much more suitable for bleaching. The only results that came of this endeavor were to impair the quality of linen and to take profits away from French workers.² "If your Majesties do not take care of your subjects," claims Montchrétien, "and put them back in possession of their rights, and put an end to the rights of the usurpers whose number increases daily, your subjects are going to lose possession of this manufacture." Already more French people are working for foreign than for native masters.³

Nothing would help French foreign trade more than keeping control of linen manufacture and sale, since the Spanish need linen for their sails, and the unbleached fabrics of Normandy and Brittany for the trade with the Indies. So much so, that this manufacture is "one of the chief mines of France; for it Potosi disgorges almost all of its silver."⁴

¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 63-64. Concerning the Dutch frauds Montchrétien adds, "No kind of dissimulation is a crime among this people provided they can get some advantage from it," p. 64.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 64-65. Cf. Laffemas, B. de, *Recueil présenté au Roy etc.*, pp. 232-233.

³ *Traicté*, p. 65.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 66.

The wool industry is, according to Montchrétien, in even worse condition than the linen:

“Are we blind or insane? Foreigners with our knowledge and consent sell their merchandise, rotten and poorly made for the most part, in the stores and public markets, and the sound and honest French goods are relegated to the little shops. They are always inventing some new fraud to entrap us, whilst faithful manufacturing is dying of inanition before us.”¹

The English have learned to make woolens from the French, but it is in France that wool workers are idle.² “How can we be considered economical,” questions Montchrétien, “if we once cease to clothe ourselves in the wool of our own sheep, or indeed, if allowing it to be taken from us, we receive it back from others manufactured with faithlessness and deceit?”³ In France bad English cloth which shrinks in the rain is sold everywhere. In England good French cloth is confiscated and burned.⁴

The woolen manufacture is steadily decreasing, but the remedy is clear. English textiles should be banned:

“How much wiser are the Flemish, who a few days ago forbade the importation of English cloths, having recognized that this cause was already beginning to cut down the employment of their men.”⁵ “Your Majesties are urged to bring to all this [declares Mont-

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 69.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 69-70.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 70-71.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 71.

⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 72-73.

chrétien, waxing poetic in behalf of the wool workers], the order begged by the prayers and most humble supplications of an infinite number of your subjects, by the tender sighs of the women, by the piteous cries of their children; . . . they point out to you submissively that their craft is their only inheritance, . . . that besides their freedom they have nothing but their income from it, . . . that being born in France it is right that they live there; this they cannot do if their only support is taken away.”¹

Silk though less useful than wool, can, according to Montchrétien, add lustre to a wealthy people, but only when it is produced by “their own care and their own industry without getting it from foreigners by means of money.”² He praises Henry IV for trying to establish silk culture in France, and thinks that the effort might have succeeded, “if those to whom His Majesty entrusted the conduct of the business had seconded him with a judgment equal to his affection.”³ The only result of these endeavors was that silk production was established in Provence, Languedoc, Dauphiné, Touraine, Lyonnais, and Beaujolais, to such an extent, that the product although not large, shows conclusively

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 73.

² *Ibid.*, p. 74.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 75; M. Funck-Brentano seems to think that Montchrétien is referring to Olivier de Serres. See note 3, p. 74. It seems much more likely that he has in mind Laffemas, the Council of Commerce, and the merchants who contracted to distribute mulberries and silk worms. Serres himself in speaking of the efforts to establish the culture of silk mentions these people as if they were the ones on whom the chief burden of responsibility fell; see Serres, O. de, *Le théâtre d'agriculture et mesnage des champs*, pp. 413-414.

that France can "supply herself and with the best [silk] in the world without buying at high prices from foreigners."¹

The extensive use of imported silk is disastrous to France. "What does it serve," complains Montchrétien, "that all the gold and silver of Peru and Mexico should come to be spilled forth in France if this luxury uses it up and takes it elsewhere?"² The problem is clear. The solution lies in the hands of the king and queen mother. Either the use of silk in France should be limited, or it should all be produced and manufactured at home. The latter remedy would take time, but it is feasible and once accomplished would employ many workers.³ It is one of the greatest strokes you could make for the good and benefit of the state," Montchrétien informs his sovereigns, "since you will thus keep in it many millions that are exported every year."⁴

As for silk stockings, "those made in France should satisfy the French," especially as it is said that more than a million *écus* go out of France every year for this article of apparel. Such a sum for stockings will not

¹ *Traicté*, p. 76.

² *Ibid.*, p. 78.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 79. Cf. also pp. 223, 224, where, speaking of Levant silks, pearls and precious stones, Montchrétien says:

"These useless superfluities and vain luxuries cost France much money, which employed elsewhere could bring in much better returns. If they once went out of fashion we would very soon become much richer because the Spanish would very often be forced to pay in cash for the grains, linens and other goods which they buy from us. Thus treasures would come into the kingdom which could keep them by the prohibition of the abovementioned [Levant] trade; your people growing rich beside through the work of manufacture [of silk] and becoming day by day better able to bear the expenses of the State."

seem astonishing, thinks Montchrétien, to anyone who will "glance at the number of legs that wear them." "Now that times and the world have changed," concedes the author, "I do not wish to condemn the use of them, provided that we retain the profit; otherwise they cost too much."¹

Fustians and camlets likewise should be made at home. The fabrics of England and Lille impose on the French merely because they are foreign. Those made in France are better. "Why do we render ourselves dependent in anything on others, rich as we are?"²

The French are still supreme in cloth dyeing, since they use woad instead of indigo, which is harmful to textiles. But styles which once were in the hands of French tailors are being created by Scotch and Flemish immigrants who have come in and learned the trade and who have "such ingratitude toward France, their foster mother, that they are very reluctant to let her real and legitimate children earn their bread; for except in case of need they wish to employ only men of their own nation."³

The king should preserve the metal and cloth industries for the French. He should not "allow others to reap their harvest" nor permit his "great strong and invincible unit of a state to become paralyzed in its principal functions by a torpor of inactive and sluggish idleness." "So many fine crafts nurtured so long in France with profit, honor and satisfaction" should not be left to die.⁴

¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 79-80.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 80-81.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 82-84.

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 83-84.

The tanning and building trades are in more satisfactory condition, but Montchrétien urges that royal care be given to printing and bookselling. The Flemish, who have "very sensitive noses" when it comes "to scenting the odor of profit" have developed the art of printing to a high degree. Employing cheap labor they send their products to France and undersell the French.¹

Fifty thousand Frenchmen are dependent for their livelihood on the printing and selling of books. What should be done for them seems clear to this economist:

"I do not doubt, . . . that if the importation of foreign books was forbidden the printers and booksellers would soon become rich. And to say frankly what I think, this prohibition could only be for the good and safety both of the rulers and the subjects [of France]. The foreign teachings poison our minds and corrupt our manners. By them a way has been found to make many of our men degenerate and to seduce them from their legitimate obedience. Bad seed has been sown in the tenderest hearts, and in them has been planted the vine of Sodom and Gomorrah. In short, monsters have been created in France which was undefiled by them before."²

Further, the export of unprinted paper should be forbidden, "because by this means the foreigner would be forced to buy our printed matter and to send here manuscripts that he wished to publish."³

In the manufacture of glass the chief complaint is against Italians who have come into France of late

¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 90-91.

² *Ibid.*, p. 92.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 94.

years and set up glass works, to the detriment of the native factories.¹

In general then, manufacturing seems to Montchrétien to be suffering from two evils: the importation of foreign goods, and the competition in France of foreign workers. The remedies are, prohibition of foreign imports (and to some extent of French exports of raw materials), regulation by the king and aid from him to native workers, and a reduction of luxury. The ideal is national self-sufficiency. "It is reasonable, it is natural justice," claims the author of the *Traicté*, "that each one should cultivate his own land; each country should feed and support its own men. Its fruits should not be like those of fig trees planted on mountain heights on which only birds of passage feed."²

Montchrétien admits that charity should be universal:

"But our affection should, however, be first directed towards the service of our citizens who are as it were allied to us by a right of blood relationship. If you question even savages on this subject they will reply that nature having given to each land its men, has to them for their own private use granted the enjoyment of the materials and goods which it produces. That is why I am beginning to be less angry than I used to be in England and in Holland at seeing our men so neglected that no one wanted to employ them even for their keep alone, however good they were as workers, when they wanted to make a stay there to learn the language."³

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 96.

² *Ibid.*, p. 113.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 114.

The ruler should reward his subjects and "let foreigners give way to them." Large undertakings need subsidies. In Holland aid is given to any worthy man who wants to establish a useful industry and all improvements in technique or machinery are encouraged.¹

To sum up, Montchrétien states with some show of self-satisfaction, "I think I have by the preceding discourses made known to Your Majesties how necessary it is from all sorts of considerations to employ the men of this kingdom, how useful to grant to them the practice of the arts, and how important in securing this result to forbid the importation of foreign products."² By such a prohibition the royal income would not suffer. For in place of the customs duties many different taxes could be laid. And, after all, the wealth of the subjects is the wealth of the ruler.³

Commerce and Trade

Commerce and trade, claims Montchrétien, are almost as essential and valuable for a state as manufacturing. For the merchants supply many things that have become necessities.⁴ Gold and silver, those "two great and faithful friends, which supply the needs of all men and are honored among all peoples", are best and most easily secured through commerce.⁵

Through commerce strength and power come to a nation. "We have Holland for proof," points out the

¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 116-119.

² *Ibid.*, p. 124.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 136-137.

⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 141-142.

author, ". . . as our ancestors had the Republics of Genoa and Venice." "If I wished to picture for posterity the usefulness of commerce," he continues, "I would describe here, on the one hand, the cities of Amsterdam and Middleburg as they were twenty-five or thirty years ago and on the other, what they are like now."¹

A careful consideration of the commercial situation of France leads Montchrétien to the belief that there are three major difficulties that are preventing improvement. First, France grants too many privileges to foreign merchants who instead of being grateful take advantage of the French in every way. Second, French merchants abroad are hampered by restrictive legislation and general bad treatment. Third, France is not making good use of her commercial opportunities.

The problem of the foreign merchants and agents in France is one that especially stirs Montchrétien's ire:

"Formerly foreigners had the door opened for them with us by force of arms, and by force likewise were they driven away." France used to be "like a beautiful and modest woman, who by the simplicity of her ornaments made known her virtue and her continence, rebuffed the desires of lovers, and drove away every unsanctioned affection; endeavoring only to please her husband and taking care only to provide comfort for her family. But now having abandoned this former lack of ostentation, gold is shining on her clothes, brilliants in her hair, pearls on her neck, diamonds on her fingers, everyone attracted from afar by this luxurious mag-

¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 142-143. Middleburg was the seat of the Dutch East India Company.

nificence comes to make love to her and attempts while caressing her to rob her of something.”¹

The public places of France “resound with barbarous accents,” points out Montchrétien in anger, “swarm with strange faces, are filled with newcomers.” The visitors do not even profit French innkeepers, for they buy fine houses and then bring their furniture and food from their home lands, “because they do not want us to gain anything from them. They do not care for that, but to carry away our money.”² These foreigners undersell the French both wholesale and retail.³ “They stop up all sources of profit.” “Then they say that we are not suited to business, that without them we would die of hunger, that we are born with a [tennis] racket in one hand and two dice in the other.”⁴

In trade “between citizen and citizen there is no loss for the public,” insists the author, it is as if “one held two vases in his two hands and poured the liquid from one to the other.” It is not so in trade with foreigners:

“They are leeches who attach themselves to this great body, suck out its best blood and gorge themselves with it, then leave the skin and detach themselves. They are ravenous lice who suck its juice and feed to bursting on it but who would leave it if it were dead. To speak clearly and without metaphor, they amass all the gold and silver in France and take it away, some to Seville, some to Lisbon, some to London, some to Amsterdam, some to Middleburg. They even use us

¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 154-155.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 165-166.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 106.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 165.

when they are among us for this purpose, make us as it were the pipes of a fountain, which get no good from the water, that they carry and conduct.¹ What more? Since everything must be told, we pay for their feasts and gluttony. It is at our expense that they live so well and regale themselves on such delicacies. We ourselves put the decoy in their hands so that they may lure and entrap us."¹

The foreigners are living so luxuriously in France that it is difficult for the French to get good servants any more.² The foreigners, having the same rights as the natives in the French markets and fairs, are only to be known by their dress and speech. Montchrétien fears that in the future they will be distinguished only by their haughty pride in growing fat as the French grow lean.³

"There is no longer room for us, not even in our own country," wails Montchrétien. "We are foreigners here and foreigners are citizens here."⁴ Worst of all the French are working as hirelings for the foreigners:

"We not only call the nations to our harvest of gold, but we ourselves reap it for them and hand it over to them in bundles at slight expense. And everyone is content to glean after these hired harvesters, who as if they had renounced their birthright, work and are paid by the day only. But where is it, Oh God, that we gather these little handfuls, instead of heaping up those fat sheaves that filled the barns of our fathers and

¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 161-162.

² *Ibid.*, p. 171.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 153.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 165.

supported comfortably their large and ample families? It is on our own lands and fields. What we sow, therefore, in tears, in sweat, in labor, the foreigner will come to reap easily and pleasantly, even indeed without taking the trouble to stoop over to gather it up. But what do I say, 'Will come'?"¹ No! the foreigner is already here.

It has become so bad that Montchrétien claims that a single foreign agent doing a business of one hundred thousand *écus* a year takes the place of ten solid native merchants.² The foreigner by arrangement with his compatriots back home can always manage to undersell the French in foreign products, because he can escape various duties in his native land.³ The natural result is that France is stripping herself to clothe others and losing her wealth to these intruders.⁴ Opportunities are so scarce in France that the young folk are reduced "to strolling on the streets, or devoting themselves to love, which Diogenes calls the business of people who have nothing else to do." The foreigners have the business while the youth of France has to play "tennis to have the pleasure of getting up a sweat."⁵

Then too, there is the problem of certain men who have "slipped into France of late years," men who do not observe Sunday, who do not eat lard, who hold secret assemblies, whose wives do not put representations of human beings into tapestries. Something will

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 188.

² *Ibid.*, p. 190.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 189-190.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 191.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 168.

have to be done "to keep from making France, so pure, so clean, . . . into a bilge, a sewer, a cesspool for other countries."¹ Hospitality to foreigners is a recognized virtue but France carries it too far.

Accusation after accusation is heaped on the foreigners by the indignant Montchrétien. They are spies who come to study French methods of fencing.² They overrun the French fairs.³ They take away the best French goods.⁴ They cheat the French by bankruptcies and money-changing.⁵ They evade the French customs duties.⁶ In short they abuse every privilege which the French in their blindness grant. But what is the reverse of the medal? While the French treat the foreigners far too well, how are they themselves treated abroad? In the answer to these questions Montchrétien depicts an even gloomier scene.

From England the French are not allowed to take away any wool although the "English with complete liberty bring into France all such woolens as they please in such great quantities even, that" the workers are forced "for the most part to take up another trade or very often to beg for their bread."⁷ In Ireland the French pay seventy-five per cent more import duties than do the English.⁸ England contrary to her treaties with France has raised the import duties on French

¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 192-193. The reference is to the Jews.

² *Ibid.*, p. 191. Cf. also, pp. 132, 169.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 170.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 169.

⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 163-164, 171-172.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 181.

⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 194-195.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 195.

serges and *bayettes*.¹ On tin the French formerly paid a double export tax, now it can be exported only through a single royal company.² In London the monopoly of French trade has been given to a special company.³ "In a word," states Montchrétien, "they prohibit all goods as it pleases them and when it pleases them, while on the contrary everything is free for them in France except contraband goods." . . . "It is not possible [for the French] to take there [to England] a hat, a sword blade, a purse, a belt, a thing which causes great loss to this kingdom."⁴

In England French merchants are cheated by restrictions, by packing and baling regulations, by weights and measures, by monopolies.⁵ The English are so strict with French ships that if an English vessel turns up bound for the same port they unload the French ship and put the cargo into the English one.⁶ They tax any Frenchman entering or leaving the kingdom. They still levy the *droit d'aubaine*.⁷ In other words the neighbors across the channel hamper the French in every conceivable way.

The Dutch, obligated as they are to France,⁸ employ

¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 195-196, *bayette* was the name of a kind of thin flannel.

² *Ibid.*, p. 196.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 197.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 198.

⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 200-201.

⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 202-203.

⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 203-204.

⁸ For the aid against the Spanish which Henry IV had continually given them. *Ibid.*, pp. 207-208.

no such vicious methods against her merchants.¹ But with the Spanish and Portuguese² it is a different story. The Spanish shut the French out of the trade with the Indies and guard those lands as a jealous husband his wife.³ If the French are caught in forbidden areas the raging Spaniard burns them, skins them alive, impales them or drowns them in sacks.⁴ French merchants who merely wish to trade "on empty coasts in desert lands" are killed and massacred.⁵

Spanish trade with foreign countries depends largely on French goods, but most of the profit goes to the Spanish king via sales taxes, and import and export duties ranging from two and one half per cent to one hundred per cent, which bring in an average of forty per cent on all goods.⁶ The general result is that the French buy at high prices what they can do without entirely, and sell cheaply what they really need.⁷

In regard to the French merchants who go to Spain Montchrétien waxes rhetorical:

¹ It is interesting to compare this point of view with that of Colbert half a century later. He was filled with rancor and bitter hate against the Dutch. So much so that the only war of Louis XIV which he approved was that against Holland. To Colbert the Dutch were "mortal enemies". See, Colbert, *Lettres, Instructions et Mémoires*, edited by P. Clément, Vol. II, p. 481, and *passim* in all volumes.

² Portugal was under Spanish rule at this time.

³ *Traicté*, p. 209.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 209. Montchrétien probably had in mind the fate of the French expeditions to Florida.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 210.

⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 210-212. Montchrétien claimed that French import and export duties averaged only about $2\frac{1}{2}$ per cent.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 213.

"What exactions do their goods not suffer? What indignities do their persons not endure? What tortures do their bodies not suffer? . . . Your Majesties have heard of the Inquisition; [he continues ironically] you can realize from this fact the love they bear your Frenchmen in Spain, that they take more pains about their salvation than they do about that of the English or Dutch. . . . The inquisitors are not employed in curing these incurables and purging these invalids, but only for your subjects."¹

Furthermore the Spanish are wont to seize French ships and use them with practically no indemnity. Just previously a number of French ships were commandeered for use in an expedition against the Barbary pirates.² If French ships are caught anywhere on the high seas the Spaniards claim that they are going to the Indies and hang the men, Catholics and Huguenots alike.³

In the trade with the Levant the French do not suffer such exactions and indignities, but this commerce is nevertheless injurious. For by it gold and silver go out of France to buy oriental luxuries. From Marseilles alone are exported seven millions *écus* of silver a year.⁴

His consideration of the treatment of foreigners in France and of Frenchmen abroad leads Montchrétien to believe that the remedies are clear. Foreigners should not be granted the same privileges in France as citizens.

¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 213-214. It is in the same sentence that Montchrétien speaks of the English and Dutch as heretics.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 215-216.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 220.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 220 ff.

Foreign merchants and their goods should be subjected to the same exactions and restrictions as are directed against the French abroad. Drawing one of his customary analogies the author declares, "If the father who does not feed his own family is considered worse than a pagan, what should be said of a king, who should wish to take away the comfort and convenience of his people . . . to make a gift of them to foreigners and immigrants." "The foreigner should not have the same privileges in the state as the citizen."¹ "France is a free land," exclaims this economist, "and business is likewise free. But it should be for her own people exclusively and especially." As it is, "she plants the vine and laboriously cultivates it, while the first comer harvests the grapes and enjoys the wine." Praise is therefore bestowed by Montchrétien on those kings of France who put up barriers against the naturalization of foreigners.²

Then too, the author feels that there is a natural basis for the distinction in the treatment of the native subject and the outsider:

"There is a great difference in the kindness that should be exercised toward the foreigner and toward the subject. The foreigner has separate gods, . . . the citizen has them in common. The foreigner has no bond whatever of friendship with us; the citizen and subject are like blood brothers. The foreigner has a different sky and land from ours; the subject has the same as ours; the same air refreshes him, the same sky covers him, the same land supports him."³

¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 152-153.

² *Ibid.*, p. 152.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 193.

"In all well-regulated commonwealths," claims Montchrétien, "great care is always taken that foreigners should not grow rich on the property of native subjects."¹ In fairness to the French, and in view of the hostile attitude of other countries to French merchants abroad, this writer insists that France should tax and restrict foreigners to such a degree as to preserve for her citizens the internal trade of France, and to put her on an equal footing with other countries in foreign trade.² Were this done there would be no country on earth equal to France in happiness, wealth and glory. There would be a tree (commerce) in the French orchard "which would bear fruit the year round, so good, so fine and so diverse that the greatest cupidity on earth could find the wherewithal for satiety."³

Of course Montchrétien realizes that objections to his restrictive policies are possible. In the *Traicté*, therefore, he answers these objections before he enters into his disquisition upon the policies. As for the treaties which would be broken by such changes, what are treaties, if they are contrary to the national welfare? Each country is master of its own fate. England herself breaks trade agreements when they are no longer useful.⁴ The argument that trade disputes will lead to a war is "a scarecrow good enough to keep birds away from grain; but not to prevent Frenchmen from mak-

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 222. See also p. 35: "It can never be considered reasonable that . . . foreigners should be equal in privileges and competing in all advantages with citizens," and p. 153: "The foreigner should not have in the state the same rights as the citizen."

² *Ibid.*, pp. 206, 218, etc.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 146-147.

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 134-135.

ing their profit under the protection of their prince.”¹ Especially when that Prince who alone wears “the crown of liberty and glory” is the greatest that the sun shines on,² while his people, “the bravest and most warlike of all, alone free in name and fact,³ owe nothing to any people on earth,” and recognize after their king and their God, nothing but their own swords.⁴

The fear that trade restrictions will create a dislike for France that will impair her commerce is equally groundless. France is so rich and so civilized that she will always attract foreigners:

“It is for the Scythians to come to the Greeks, [cries Montchrétien exulting]. Honor, courtesy, industry, skill have chosen to make their home with us, they will be glad to stay here always if we ourselves do not drive them away. Other peoples will consider themselves fortunate enough if only while making regulations worthy of French greatness, strength and repute, we permit them to come to light their tapers at our torch.”⁵

As a particularly valuable kind of restriction Montchrétien urges that heavy export duties be laid on the great French raw materials, wheat, wine, salt, wool and flax.⁶ Since “the economy of a state is like that of a

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 136.

² *Ibid.*

³ This is a favorite play on words with Montchrétien and other authors of his time. *Franc* = Free.

⁴ *Traicté*, p. 136.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 132.

⁶ In most of this argument Montchrétien is following Bodin, see *Les six livres de la république*, p. 875 ff., and *Discours de*

body," explains this economist, "which retains the necessary portion of its nourishment and rejects the superfluous. Good political regulation chooses the useful . . . letting out of its hands only that of which it has too much."¹ If the export of these necessary raw materials were heavily taxed the royal revenues would be increased. If the foreigners bought less, there would be more for the French and at lower prices. There is no need to worry, however, that trade will be diminished, for "the greatest treasures always come where there are the most things necessary for life, even when there are no mines of gold and silver."²

The position of France is so fortunate that while she has everything she needs for herself, the other countries are dependent on her bounty and pity. "This kingdom is so flourishing," points out Montchrétien, "and abounds so in everything that could be wished for, that all it has to do is not to borrow anything from its neighbors. The merchants who go to distant lands bring us some medicinal and aromatic drugs, which, however, we do not need and would perhaps be better off without. What is foreign corrupts us."³ On the other hand France fills Spain with wheat, linen, woolens, ironware and the like.⁴

It may be objected that since France has no mines, she must encourage all exports to get gold and silver

Jean Bodin etc., etc., p. 61 ff. In some passages the muse seems to have dictated to the later author words almost identical with those of the great sixteenth-century publicist.

¹ *Traicté*, p. 247.

² *Ibid.*, p. 240.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 160.

into the country. But Montchrétien feels that commerce as it is carried on is taking more money out of the kingdom than is brought in. But if wise regulations were once adopted this situation would be remedied. "Let Your Majesties make the experiment," this author informs the king and the queen mother, "and forbid the importation of manufactured articles which are made by the skill of men, and let no raw materials and products be exported from this realm,¹ and you will have the satisfaction of seeing that your state has as many resources natural and acquired as it needs to get on well and live well."² French skill in manufactures can be depended on to bring in the gold and silver of other countries.

High export taxes, and the prohibition of the export of certain goods would discourage foreigners from coming to France, and thus benefit her citizens.³ Such steps, moreover, would not cut down the sale of certain profitable commodities. For instance, the English and Flemish would be glad to get French wheat, wines, linens, and salt at any price.⁴

In considering commercial matters one thing in particular astonishes Montchrétien, that the French with all their opportunities are playing no part in the profit-

¹ Except through "heartfelt pity" and as "charitable aid to neighbors."

² *Traité*, pp. 246-247.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 249.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 246. Montchrétien, though at times clear that it is raw materials of which the export should be taxed, is often hazy on the distinction between them and manufactured products. In this instance he includes linens with salt, wine and wheat. Salt of course can be considered as a raw material for the preparation of salted fish and meat.

able trade with the far East. One would think that the “glorious successes of the enterprises” of their neighbors and “the profits” would stir them into some semblance of activity.¹ The Dutch East India Company, for example, is bringing in marvelous returns to those who participate in its undertakings. This very year the Dutch are sending nine well-armed vessels to the fabled lands of the Orient. The government of Holland, realizing the value of such trade, is assisting it with ships, men and money.²

Instead of watching in supine idleness while others wax rich and strong in this lucrative commerce France should form an East India Company using that of the Dutch as a model. A company is necessary since an individual, however rich, cannot support such long and hazardous voyages. If the French would only set out to win their share of the Eastern trade, and if proper royal aid were forthcoming, the author of the *Traicté* assures his readers that France would soon be richer, greater and stronger.³

To Montchrétien, then, commerce is of an importance to France second only to manufacturing. France has infinite commercial possibilities, but certain steps must be taken to assure their realization. Foreigners who are swarming into France and bleeding her of her wealth should be limited in their activities as French merchants are abroad. Export taxes should be laid on the raw materials which France produces in such abundance and manufactured imports should be forbidden. And an

¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 250-251.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 252-254.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 252-255.

East India Company should be established to gain for France her rightful portion of the Eastern trade.

Sea Power

"Your Majesties have two seas at the extremities of this kingdom. I call them two doors giving issue to the two ends of the world, two gates by which your noble peoples can carry the lily-decked oriflamme to all the corners of the earth."¹ In these words Montchrétien urges upon the king and Marie de Medici the necessity of making use of France's natural advantages. France, abutting on two seas, and well supplied with ports and harbors should seek to increase her power on the ocean; especially as land conquests are becoming more and more difficult and expensive.² If there are not enough harbors more can easily be constructed; and this should be done, for they are "the bulwarks" of the state, "the fortresses of the coast," "stations of commerce."³

All that is needed, according to Montchrétien, is to arouse the French from their lethargy and point out the sea roads to them. They have behind them the great seafaring tradition of the Gauls.⁴ It is for the king to break the chains that are holding the French enslaved:

"Following the example of Ulysses, that wise king, take your sceptre in hand and force them to embark in

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 304.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 302-303.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 307.

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 280-281. Montchrétien's patriotism seems to overpower his sense of historical accuracy in discussing this point, as he makes of the Gauls the first and the greatest of the sea-going peoples.

your ships, so that they may carry your arms to the ends of the earth, and cause it to be recognized everywhere that France with better right than Homer's Ithaca should be called the mother of brave and prudent men, that properly she boasts of being the Queen of Christendom, the school of manners, the center of arts, in a word the glory of the world.”¹ “Asia awaits you and the ocean opens its arms to you.”²

Sea power is no royal toy, it is the road to wealth, greatness and glory.³ The Spanish and Portuguese have gained first place on the sea while the French have been embroiled in civil disturbances. Then too France is such a pleasant land that her sons are loath to leave it.⁴ In more recent years it has been the Dutch who have shown better than any others that to develop sea power is “the quickest way to strengthen, enrich and increase the might of a state, the best way to resist a strong enemy and to support a long war against him.” The Dutch, too, have demonstrated that control of the carrying trade is an easy road to wealth and power.⁵

Having discussed the natural advantages of France and the value of sea power Montchrétien goes on to point out the directions which such development should take. Beside the possibilities presented by the decadent Turkish power and the golden opportunities in the far East, strengthened maritime forces would permit France to compete in the trade with the New World. The Spanish more by good luck than good manage-

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 279.

² *Ibid.*, p. 276.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 282.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 283.

⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 249, 307.

ment have gained control of all the trade of the West Indies and are finding it to a high degree lucrative.¹ France has had great explorers on her roster of heroes, but through negligence or ignorance, knowledge of and control over the sea routes have slipped out of her hands.² But if the king and his subjects would only make the effort in this century of unequalled opportunity "the circumference of the earth would soon be the crown of France."³

The French merchant marine can easily be made strong by proper support and regulation. French subjects who enter into overseas trade should receive especial care.⁴ Above all the king should command his subjects "to use only French ships and sailors."⁵ Such a step would prevent money going out of France to pay Dutch carriage charges, and would not raise the cost as the French would soon be able to provide service as cheaply as anybody else.⁶ To increase the French merchant marine would be to employ a great number of men who are idle.⁷

But France does not merely need more merchant ships, she needs war vessels as well, insists Montchrétien:

"Nothing causes so much daring and insolence in foreigners not only in their own lands but also in ours, not only on sea but also on land, as that they realize

¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 287-288.

² *Ibid.*, p. 288 ff.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 298.

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 304-305.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 185.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 309.

that we are inferior to them in naval equipment and power.” “A fleet, well-equipped, well-provisioned, well-commanded, beside the safety it brings the country internally by defending it from without, is still more suited to carry quickly in the East and in the West the fear of a great and powerful monarch.”¹

In addition to the merchant ships and the navy Montchrétien emphasizes one other nursery of sea power, the fisheries. Cod-fishing is almost all in French hands, and deserves “to be kept there carefully.” For it employs six hundred Norman and Breton ships, supports directly fifteen or twenty thousand people and indirectly vast numbers of others who make ships and marine supplies or deal in fish. The king should aid cod-fishing as it trains his subjects in seafaring and long voyages.²

With the herring fisheries it is another story. People are getting to think that Dutch herring are better than French. Yet they are the same fish. It is only a question of salting them properly. The Dutch use refined salt. So can the French, especially as this better grade is a French product. While the Dutch are growing wealthy on the herring they catch, the French are badly off. French sailors are out of work, and only half as many ships as formerly go out to catch the herring. The best way to remedy the situation is to forbid absolutely the importation into France of foreign herring. If this is not feasible, a heavy tax on foreign herring and exemption from all charges for French herring might turn the trick. If only the fisheries can be kept up, they will employ Frenchmen and build up French sea power.³

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 303.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 231-232.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 232-235.

Colonies

To Montchrétien it seems that the question of colonies is not receiving proper attention in France. He bewails the intrusion of the Dutch into the trade with Canada, the sole New World possession of France.¹ He urges exploration, conquest and trade, indicating the wealth France might obtain from America and Africa. He points out the power gained by Spain from overseas. To him colonies mean the opportunity to plant "New Frances" ² where the natives may be Christianized, French products sold, and raw materials secured.

"Let us not fear," he encourages his countrymen in a long passage bristling with Biblical quotations, ". . . to force our way through waves and tempests to make known the name of God, our Creator, to the many barbarian peoples who stretch out their arms to us, who are ready to subject themselves to us, so that by holy teachings and good examples we can set them on the road to salvation."³

The French are late in the missionary field but they should not falter. "If to plant the worship of God," Montchrétien exhorts them, "you need arms, remember that the children of Israel in rebuilding the temple had always a sword in one hand, a trowel in the other."⁴ But the arms, it seems, are more apt to be borne against

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 229.

² *Ibid.*, p. 314.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 220. In the whole section on colonies Montchrétien does not localize his descriptions very much. Most of the time he seems to be talking about the East Coast of North America from Florida to Hudson Bay, with occasional reference to Africa.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 320.

the Spaniards than the natives, for the latter, claims the author, "are inclined to love us as much as they hate the cruel and rough masters who have treated them not only like slaves but like the worst and most despicable animals in the world, calling them sometimes scum of the earth, sometimes a race of devils."¹

These savages are not a degenerate race, they have on the contrary many admirable qualities and may well turn out to be fit subjects for civilization, French style.

"If it is possible to remove what is bad in them, [remarks the author judicially] and to put in its place our good qualities, that is to say to give them our virtues without the admixture of our vices, they would be worthy men. That is why we can hope some day to see flourishing among them piety, faith, justice and all other kinds of virtues to which they can be trained and accustomed by teaching and by imitation [of us], fond admirers as they are [already] of our customs and ways of doing things." "Now if it is proper for any nation on earth to set its hand to this work it is proper for the French to do so, with whom has dwelt as if it belonged there, the glory of letters and of arms, of arts and of courtesy and what is more of true Christianity whatever others may pretend."²

But this missionary work is not to be a piece of sheer altruism:³

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 321.

² *Ibid.*, p. 322. The end of this quotation is another passage which possibly suggests that Montchrétien was a Catholic. The word pretend may be significant when it is remembered that Protestantism was referred to in France as the religion of the "pretended" reform.

³ Montchrétien points out a page earlier (p. 321) that what are trifling objects for the French are wealth for the savages.

"It cannot be doubted that beside the blessing of God which would come to this great and powerful state for enterprises so pious, so just and so charitable, there would be opened up by this means great and inexhaustible sources of wealth. Because first the [French] subjects on both sides [of the ocean] would have such an ample opportunity to sell and resell all such manufactures as they could make or transport (of which an abundance would result from putting into practice the methods set down in the two preceding books), that to the employment would be added the comfort of as many men as there are here now or as may be here in the future, whether they devote themselves to manufactures or arms. The French would, through their own efforts, have a market for linens, woolens, leather, hats, shoes, dry goods, hardware, cutlery, iron and steel ware, nails, fur products, pots and pans, pottery, glass-ware, fishhooks, rosaries, glass beads and in general for all the manufactured products a greater demand for which by the natives will increase proportionally their [the French] profits. If copper, gold and silver mines are found, (there being without doubt very good ones as the savages themselves give one to understand, designating especially the regions of *Chisca*, *Apalatchen*, *Mangoas*, *Menan Saguenay*, etc.) what prevents our working there with the same results as the Spanish in the lands that they possess. Besides, through the intercourse between this kingdom and the countries which you [the King] could cause to be settled how many men would be employed both in gathering and selling goods. We would get from our own people what we buy at such high prices from foreigners : silks ; cottons ; resins ; essences ; gums ; medicinal and aromatic woods ; gaiac ; sarsaparilla ; sassafras (called in Florida *pavagne* and in Virginia *ruinank*) ; sweet costus ; bitter

costus; white sandalwood; lemon colored sandalwood; yellow sandalwood; china root; cassia fistula; cassia lignea; long pepper and a number of spices; a number of trees like the cahinca root, a specific for poisons; *haneda* [*Phanebane*=henbane], excellent against scurvy and painful swellings of the limbs; mechoacan; and possibly rhubarb, since similar roots with the same purgative effect are found there; clay for painting and medicine, so carefully guarded in the Levant; sumac; rock alum; and plume alum; white copperas; vitriol; saltpetre; musk; ambergris in quantity; benzoin, mastic; incense; skins and furs; dyes and paints; minerals; wood of oak for staves and planks; of cedar; of cypress; of terebinth; resin; tar; pitch; flax; hemp; in short all such commodities as the countries of Denmark, Danzig, Sweden, Norway, Muscovy, Russia and Poland are wont to supply us. Where could one more conveniently make wood ashes for soap in such quantities as desired? What is to prevent, after a short while, the production of wines as good as those that can be secured from Spain, the Canaries, Crete or Malaga? Where can the cod be caught more abundantly or more easily, since fishing is possible there from the month of March to the month of September; where better to catch whales, seals, sea cows with which to make the oils necessary for the manufacture of woolens and soaps, for the preparation of leathers and for a number of other products; where more conveniently can the sturgeon be caught, the salmon and other fishes such as can be salted for the locality and for export to Spain, France, Italy, Greece and other regions where there is the best market for them?"¹

¹ *Traicté*, pp. 323-325. This passage is quoted at length as a good early example of mercantilist colonial hopes.

Montchrétien grows almost lyrical over the possibilities that the New World holds forth to the French. The trade will employ ships and sailors.¹ No taxes will enrich foreigners on the goods brought to France from America. In a few years the new countries might bring forth beside their own native products such exotic goods as olive oil, woad, saffron, flax, wheat, rye, peas, lentils, fruits, silk, cattle etc.² In short America is a promised land of wealth and power, a land which, under French control might supplement the productivity of the home country and make France utterly self-sufficient. As a culminating inducement to settle North America, Montchrétien is sure that a little more exploration would result in the discovery of the long-sought northwest passage.³

Montchrétien's System

The analysis of the *Traicté de l'Œconomie Politique* should have made clear the main elements of Montchrétien's mercantilism. He was far more theoretical than Laffemas, and was imbued with a conviction that a little royal regulation would speedily correct all evils. Indeed his doctrines so far ignored many of the real difficulties that his teachings might well be termed mercantilism of the chair. His ideas sprang from a mélange of earlier writings, combined with what he

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 325.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 325-327.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 329. On the question of peopling the new colonies, the author seems to vacillate between a desire to use them as a safety valve, whither malcontents and hot-headed citizens might be sent, and a wish to see them populated with a sturdy, honest and industrious citizenry. See *Traicté*, p. 301 and p. 315.

himself had seen and done, and salted with remedies produced by abstract ratiocination.

But all in all Montchrétien produced a more complete theory than any of his predecessors; for he dealt with more different angles and considered more varied conditions. In fact, it is not too much to say that his book contains a fairly well rounded presentation of the industrial and commercial situation of France in 1615, together with suggestions as to the means of improving all unsatisfactory elements.

Like earlier writers Montchrétien emphasized the natural wealth of France, the value of its large population, and the need of destroying idleness and unemployment by providing work for all. He was even more convinced than most, of the importance of manufacturing, and he saw the chief means of aiding it in the exclusion of foreign manufacturers, making the reduction of luxury and royal support to entrepreneurs ancillary remedies. Commerce was to this author a royal road to wealth; to improve it he advocated restrictions on foreigners trading in France, help for French merchants and export taxes on raw materials. Montchrétien was notable in his time for his realization of the vital need for sea power, and his ardent desire to strengthen the merchant marine, the navy and the fishing fleets. On the question of colonies this economist foreshadowed his successors like Richelieu and Colbert in seeing them as markets, sources of raw materials, fields for missionary activity, and New Frances overseas which would strengthen and revitalize Old France.

In contradistinction to the cosmopolitanism of Bodin and Sully of which even Laffemas had a trace, Mont-

chrétien hated all foreigners, with a bitter, biting scorn and deep-seated antipathy that is hard to rival. It was the foreigners who were encroaching on French manufactures, stealing her commerce, creating her unemployment, maltreating her merchants. They were the enemy; against them he directed his heavy artillery; against them his indignation became virulent. On almost every page of the *Traicté*, mingled incongruously with classic quotation, Biblical phrases, and historical allusions appears some evidence of his distrust of all who were not French. Their presence he felt to be a pollution, a stain on the pristine purity of his native land. The very word *étrangère* was bitter on his lips.¹

But the emotional flavoring of Montchrétien's economics was not entirely negative. He loved France with an intensity that was almost fierce. He loved her skies and her fields and her rivers. Above all things he wanted to see her busy and prosperous, her workshops humming, her ships sailing on every sea, her flag flying in every corner of the earth. His whole *Traicté* was a labor of love, an epistle indited to his mistress, France.

To call the *Traicté* a complete presentation of early mercantilism is not unfair, for in it are lacking only those elements which were to come into prominence later in the seventeenth century. The most notable omission is the failure to develop explicitly the doctrine of the balance of trade. It is present implicitly in most of the measures which Montchrétien advocated, but

¹ He was laying the foundations for Colbert's idea of commerce as an economic war. See Colbert, *Lettres, Instructions et Mémoires*, Vol. II, pp. CCLXIX-CCLXX, Vol. VI, p. 269, Vol. VII, p. 250, etc.

never in so many words does he urge an excess of exports, over imports, as the chief desideratum. He was, perhaps, a little too skeptical of the ultimate value of gold and silver¹ to be a full-fledged mercantilist, yet for 1615 he was a remarkably good one.

¹ e.g., "It is not the abundance of gold and silver, the quantity of pearls and diamonds which makes states opulent, it is the supply of things necessary for life and suitable for clothing." *Traicté*, p. 241; see also pp. 53, 155, 243, etc.

On the other hand, Montchrétien was always worried intensely by any situation which tended to cause the export of gold and silver from France; see *Traicté*, pp. 78, 80, 180, 220-221, etc.

CHAPTER IV

MERCANTILIST DEVELOPMENTS CONTEMPORARY WITH LAFFEMAS AND MONTCHRÉTIEN

Neither the work of Laffemas nor that of Montchrétien converted their compatriots immediately into ardent advocates of a well formulated mercantilist system. Developments in the laws and in the assemblies went on much as they had in the period before the pamphlets of Laffemas began to appear. There was, however, an accelerated tempo. Ideas grew and expanded more rapidly; they came in greater numbers. The mercantilism was more pronounced, the theories more complete. The change is intangible, but it is there, sometimes evidenced only by the fact that a proposition that would have had to be buttressed by arguments in 1570 could be taken as axiomatic in 1620. The clearest way in which to bring out this impalpable modification is, perhaps, to discuss the mercantilist developments between 1589 and 1629 in the same categories in which they were treated for the preceding era.

Bullionism

Value of Gold and Silver

An explicit appreciation of the value of the precious metals is to be found in an edict on money of 1602.

In discussing the evils arising from the civil wars it declared that among them there was "none to be feared so much as that which comes from the scarcity and lack of gold and silver, [which arises] both because of the extreme decrease in trade and commerce and because of the great export of our soundest money into foreign lands."¹ Among the steps listed as remedies for this situation were the prohibition of the entry of manufactured goods, the encouragement of the importation of raw materials, the reduction of taxation on commodities so that their cheapness might attract foreign purchasers, the enforcement of the old ordinances against the export of bullion, and the enactment of more rigorous ones.²

At the close of the Estates General of 1614, the clergy made extracts from their *cahier* concerning the problems that seemed to them to be most pressing and to need most urgently the immediate attention of the king. The problem of gold and silver was included in this group. "Your realm," they told the king, "endowed by the grace of God with all sorts of wealth is now very poor in gold and silver, and what is left of them is paid out gradually in tribute to the foreigners." The king was advised to summon those acquainted with the problem and upon their advice to draw up measures to ameliorate the situation.³ To alleviate the lack of bul-

¹ Isambert, Vol. XV, p. 270.

² *Ibid.*, Vol. XV, pp. 270-271. Topically considered these remedies should not be taken up at this point. They are brought in to show how far the realization of the interconnection of other phases of mercantilism with bullionism had gone by this time, perhaps under the influence of Laffemas.

³ *Recueil de Pièces etc.*, Vol. VI, p. 542.

lion the third estate urged the king to arrange that imports from the Levant be paid for in goods not money and that exports to Spain be paid for in money not goods.¹ The Assembly of Notables of 1626 likewise complained bitterly that the Spanish were trying to force the French to accept goods instead of money in return for their shipments.²

Prohibition of the Export of Bullion

The idea that a supply of gold and silver could be built up by forbidding their export still continued. Because such shipment of bullion out of the realm was "greatly prejudicial to the public welfare" it was forbidden under pain of death in 1602³ and the prohibition was reenacted in 1609.⁴ In the Estates General of 1614 both the third estate and the clergy turned their attention to this subject. The former requested that the old laws be enforced.⁵ Article 203 in the *cahier* of the latter read in part, "Your Majesty will forbid, if it please him, the export of money which is made to foreign countries by way of various places in your kingdom, and chiefly via Marseilles and other ports of Provence, in sums so excessive that they amount to millions every year."⁶ The Code Michaud (1629) specifically forbade all governors of frontier posts to grant passports for the export of precious metals.⁷

¹ Mayer, Vol. XVII, part 2, pp. 134, 137.

² *Assemblée des Notables etc.*, p. 210.

³ Isambert, Vol. XV, p. 274.

⁴ *Ibid.*, Vol. XV, p. 348.

⁵ *Recueil des Cahiers etc.*, Vol. IV, p. 455.

⁶ *Ibid.*, Vol. IV, p. 109. The shipment of money from Marseilles was chiefly to purchase goods from the Levant.

⁷ Isambert, Vol. XVI, p. 281.

The Question of Luxury

Spurred on, perhaps, by Laffemas' interest in silk and other costly fabrics, the attack on luxury as tending to dissipate the bullion of the nation continued and even gathered momentum in the years following 1589. The use of gold and silver on clothes was forbidden by a declaration of 1594.¹ Two years later the Assembly of Notables at Rouen asked that the ancient sumptuary laws against the use of gold and of silver on clothes, precious stones, pearls and other things "that luxury makes expensive" be revived and enforced.² In the first quarter of the seventeenth century the use of cloth of gold and cloth of silver was five times prohibited.³ The very frequency of the laws is perhaps an index of the difficulty, not to say the impossibility of enforcement.

Feeling that some remedy must be found, the Estates General of 1614 dealt with the problem of luxury at great length. The old demand for class differentiation still made itself felt, for a district *cahier* of the third estate declared :

"One of the greatest disorders existing in this kingdom is the corruption and destruction of good morals produced by the liberty that almost all classes of persons without distinction have unwisely taken in clothing themselves too superbly, in dining too elaborately and too heavily, and in furnishing and fitting out [their establishments] too sumptuously."

¹ *Ibid.*, Vol. XIV, p. 90.

² Mayer, Vol. XVI, pp. 18-19.

³ In 1600, 1601, 1606, 1613, and 1623. See Isambert, Vol. XV, pp. 239, 263, 303, Vol. XVI, pp. 39, 145.

But motives other than an interest in social gradation were present, since the document continued, "His Majesty is very humbly begged that it be forbidden to sell in this kingdom any materials of silk save those that are made here, because of the great export of money which is made from this kingdom."¹ The same *cahier* likewise urged that the wearing of silk be prohibited, except for those of very exalted rank, together with the use of pearls, precious stones and silver services. Gold and silver ornament was to be allowed only in churches and on the arms of the nobles.²

Another district *cahier*, likewise of the third estate, asked that luxury be reduced and the different social ranks kept separate.³ While the general *cahier* of the commoners requested that the old laws of Henry IV be enforced and that no one except those exempted by the king be permitted to wear pearls or jewels or to possess gilded carriages.⁴ The clergy in their *cahier* went into more specific detail:

"The use of silks both in cloth and in hose, which is excessive and unregulated in your kingdom is the cause of the export of the better part of the gold and the silver that is in it to foreign countries, with such great and incredible lack of order that since the death of Henry II silk stockings alone have cost your kingdom twenty millions in gold; and it is, therefore, very necessary to make most rigorous laws and regulations to

¹ *Recueil de Pièces etc.*, Vol. IX, p. 58. This *cahier* is for the Province of Berry.

² *Ibid.*, Vol. IX, pp. 58-59.

³ *Ibid.*, Vol. IX, p. 84. This *cahier* is for the government of Champagne, Brie and Sens.

⁴ Mayer, Vol. XVII, part 2, pp. 115-116.

suppress the luxury which has gone so far, and to forbid foreign merchants to bring cloths, fabrics and stockings of silk into this kingdom of yours which can furnish more than is needed of them if such regulations are made and observed. . . . The great benefit which will come to your state from such an ordinance . . . is far more important than any loss . . . in customs duties.”¹

The nobles joined the ecclesiastics in urging that luxury be repressed, but they wished also “to distinguish the quality of persons” and to forbid the use of satin and velvet to all save gentlemen.²

A memorial presented to the king after the close of the Estates General by the members of the Parlement of Paris reënforced the animadversions of the *cahiers* upon the question of luxury. The judges asked the king to “repress the great luxury,” and especially “the stuffs and embroideries of gold and silver, the pearls and diamonds, the embroideries, the laces of Flanders and those of Milan, Chinese fabrics and other useless goods which are brought from the ends of the earth, by means of which an incredible quantity of gold and silver is drawn out of your kingdom.”³

Luxury was still a problem in the early seventeenth century and its mercantilist implications were still clear. But more than a century of thought on the matter had brought forth no solution save the expression of vain hopes and the promulgation of equally vain laws.

¹ *Recueil des cahiers etc.*, Vol. IV, p. 117.

² *Ibid.*, Vol. IV, p. 239.

³ Mayer, Vol. XVII, part 2, p. 117.

Internal Development

Self-Sufficiency

Like luxury, internal development was a topic carried over into the seventeenth century as a subject for cogitation. There was still a feeling of exuberant confidence in the natural wealth of France. The country could support itself and produce sufficient for a widespread trade overseas. In the Assembly of Notables of 1626, for instance, a spokesman for the meeting informed the king:

“You have . . . forests, fabrics for sails, cordage, sailors, and very expert navigators, in short everything necessary to carry on sea commerce. As for goods there is no country under heaven which nature has provided more liberally than yours, for beside the grain which is sent to Tuscany, Spain and Barbary and other places, there is produced here a quantity of wines which the Flemish, English, Germans, the peoples of Norway, Denmark and Sweden come to load up with and take away every year. I am not counting the salt, the iron, the dye, the saffron, the cork, the resin, the manufactures and other things of less price which being taken together are of a value great enough to enrich a kingdom. But I cannot omit mention of the quantity of hemp and of cloth that is exported especially for the sails and cordage of the fleets of Seville and Lisbon; and what is more important is the fact that all these things are so essential that our neighbors cannot in this particular do without your aid since the goods that they get from your state are not like the larger part of theirs either useless or superfluous, but entirely neces-

sary for life, and without which they would be forced to suffer hunger and to remain idle and unoccupied in their harbors, no longer getting from you the nerves which give motion to their vessels.”¹

Industry, Agriculture, Mines

Under Henry IV industry was again a prime object of interest and of support. During the religious wars a large part of the manufacturing establishments built up by the Valois had languished or disappeared. But once more they began to receive royal aid and encouragement. Of this renewed attention to manufacturing a typical example is to be found in an edict of 1603 inspired by the work of Laffemas’ Commission. In the preamble it was laid down as axiomatic that the best way to bring about a recovery from the troubles and want caused by the wars was to establish once more industrial arts and manufactures. It was hoped that such a step would not only enrich the kingdom but also that it would make it unnecessary for the French to go to their neighbors “like beggars” to seek abroad what they could easily produce at home. Further, to build up industry would be to purge the realm “of the great number of vices born of idleness,” and to prevent “the exportation of gold and silver” whereby neighboring countries were made wealthy at the expense of France.²

In securing these varied ends the manufactures most worthy of attention were those of cloth of gold, cloth of silver and silk. That the introduction of such manufactures would not be difficult the king was assured by

¹ *Assemblée des Notables etc.*, pp. 213-214.

² Isambert, Vol. XV, p. 283.

his Commission of Commerce. In the execution of this design the king was prepared to grant extensive privileges. He had already forbidden the importation of these luxury fabrics. By this edict he authorized certain individuals to set up their establishments at Paris, and made the entrepreneurs members of his household, promising them the status of nobles if they persisted in their efforts for twelve years. Nor was this all. The new manufacturers were to be allowed to have a certain amount of raw silk dyed abroad; for twelve years no one was to compete with them without their consent; no one was to sell goods that did not bear the stamp of these favored producers; no internal or export duties were to be levied on their products; their employees were to receive special rights including freedom from the restrictions on foreigners, and from regulation by the guilds; the king was willing to advance to the entrepreneurs a large sum of money, in part a gift, in part a loan without interest.¹

Following the lines laid down under Henry IV the Estates General of 1614 advocated the establishment of industry as the proper way to "employ the numerous vagabonds and idle folk and to prevent the export . . . of great sums of money for the purchase of these manufactured goods."² The means by which this end was to be achieved were for the most part such as fall under the head of commerce.

Agriculture as well as industry received support in this later period. An edict (of 1599) to encourage the

¹ *Ibid.*, Vol. XV, pp. 284-287.

² *Recueil des Cahiers etc.* Vol. IV, p. 406. The quotation is from the *cahier* of the third estate.

draining of certain swamps contained a long digression on the theoretical value of agricultural pursuits:

“The strength and wealth of kings consists in the opulence and number of their subjects, and the greatest and most legitimate profit and revenue of peoples, including our own, proceeds chiefly from the working and cultivation of the land which renders unto them, by the grace of God, at a high rate of return, wheat, wines, grains, vegetables and fodder for animals, by which not only may they live in comfort but with which also they may carry on trade and commerce with our neighbors and with distant countries and get from them gold, silver and all the things which they have in greater abundance than we and which are commonly considered proper for the use of men.”¹

Of the various phases of agriculture that which received the most attention in this period was the raising of mulberry trees and the silk worms that fed on them. In the legislation of the time is reflected the activity of Laffemas, Olivier de Serres and the Commission of Commerce. In an order dating from 1602 the king issued regulations to assist in the carrying out of the silk culture contract. Certain individuals, elected by each parish, were to be made responsible for the co-operation of their fellow parishioners.² Again an edict of 1605 represented an attempt to force all ecclesiastics to help in the mulberry project. Between the lines it is easy to read the difficulties which the plan was meeting at every hand. In some cases, for example, where the entrepreneurs had been actually ready to supply the

¹ Isambert, Vol. XV, p. 213.

² *Ibid.*, Vol. XV, pp. 278 ff.

mulberries and silk worms, the seed and eggs had been left on their hands because the clergy and others had felt disinclined to enter into the culture of silk.¹

In addition to industry and agriculture some attention was still paid to mines. As late as 1601 an effort was being made to discover mines, to make known the mineral wealth of France, and to induce the French to exploit the mines with the aid of such foreigners as could be attracted by the offer of privileges.² Twenty-five years later interest seemed to have centered particularly upon the production of iron. Iron, in an edict of that year (1626), was declared to be the basis of industry. The use of poor grades of iron was, it was felt, cutting down the sale of French products abroad, since in these grades the foreigners could undersell the French. In fact France was importing this type of iron and thereby losing a "great quantity of money." As a remedy the industry was to be carefully regulated and the export of good quality iron in an unworked state forbidden.³

The Poor as Producers

In connection with the various phases of production in France, the problem of how to get the poor to work received considerable attention during this period. By an order of 1612 an elaborate system for the creation of something like workhouses for the poor was adumbrated. It was asserted that "sturdy beggars" taking advantage of public and private charity, instead of

¹ *Ibid.*, Vol. XV, pp. 291-293.

² *Ibid.*, Vol. XV, p. 253.

³ *Ibid.*, Vol. XVI, p. 183 ff.

earning a living, were flocking to the cities, there to lead a life both "idle and careless." Those who were really in need of aid because of misfortune or ill health were to receive it, but in Paris only poor persons native to that city were to be cared for. As for the other type of poor people, they were to be shut up in two establishments, one for men, one for women, girls, and boys under eight. There they were to be fed as "austerely as possible" and employed at hard labor, the men at such work as grinding wheat, the women and children at spinning, making buttons or the like. The daily hours of work were to be thirteen in winter, fourteen in summer. Behind such a plan there seem to be two mingling motives. The first to punish idleness, the second to render those who were idle, productive either by making them work directly or by scaring them into working.¹

In the Estates General of 1614 it was the third estate especially that took up the problem of the idle poor. Twice in their *cahier* the commoners suggested that all "sturdy beggars" be forced to return to their houses, and to work and support themselves under penalty of corporal punishment.² This recommendation was eventually enacted into law in the Code Michaud (1629) in an article which sought to compel the poor to work "continually" and to remove all opportunities for idleness.³

¹ *Ibid.*, Vol. XVI, pp. 28-30.

² *Recueil des Cahiers etc.* Vol. IV, pp. 293-294, 295.

³ Isambert, Vol. XVI, p. 235. This code was based in part on the *cahiers* of 1614.

Restrictions on Foreigners

Following the example of earlier Estates Generals, the third estate in its *cahier* of 1614 earnestly requested that no one except native Frenchmen be allowed to engage in the farming of the taxes.¹ In the same document there appeared, however, a new demand reflecting probably the influence of Laffemas and his Commission. It was urged upon the king "that it be enjoined upon Italians and other foreigners dwelling in your kingdom, artisans in glass making, fayence ware, tapestries, and other crafts of all sorts to take on and keep as apprentices such native Frenchmen as wish to learn to work in these arts and crafts."² Thus the trade secrets of the foreigners would be made part of the industrial heritage of the French. Article 417 of the Code Michaud (1629) put into law, almost word for word, this demand voiced by the third estate.³

Commerce

Like bullionism and internal development, commerce after 1589 continued to be one of the chief foci of mercantilist interest. The most noteworthy changes were a tendency to consider it axiomatic that commerce was a source of wealth, that manufactured imports should be banned and that exports of raw materials should be discouraged, and an even more noticeable

¹ *Recueil des Cahiers etc.* Vol. IV, p. 384. The same suggestion is put forward in the district *cahier* of the third estate, of the province of Berry, see *Recueil de Pièces etc.* Vol. IX, p. 52.

² *Recueil des Cahiers etc.* Vol. IV, p. 462.

³ Isambert, Vol. XVI, p. 327.

increase in interest in the encouragement of shipping and foreign trade.

Commerce as a Source of Wealth and Power

It was in the Assembly of Notables of 1626 that the most explicit statements as to the value of commerce are to be found in this period. The Keeper of the Seals (de Marillac) in his speech opening the assembly called commerce "the most suitable means of enriching the people and restoring the honor of France."¹ In a recommendation drawn up by the notables was the statement that it is commerce "which maintains states in splendor and brings wealth, plenty and comfort within [the state] and honor, esteem and reputation without."² A spokesman for the assembly told the king that there were two chief objects of statecraft, the first being "to make the state strong and powerful," the second to see to it that "the citizens are provided with all that is necessary for life." The assembly, he declared, "after having thought by what method those ends could be attained . . . has found none more speedy and more practical and more glorious than commerce by sea."³

"Who does not realize [he continued] that Spain would succumb without the aid of the Indies? . . . What would become of the Dutch without the sea? Since beside the aid which they received from their neighbors, they spent last year fifteen millions of *livres*

¹ *Assemblées des Notables etc.*, p. 32.

² *Ibid.*, p. 182.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 207.

for the war, a thing which shows well enough that to capture the golden fleece it is necessary to emulate the Argonauts, spread sails to the wind, and seek¹ fortune on sea.”¹

Imports

The thinkers of the period did not envisage a commerce free to seek and bring wealth as it would. Regulations were considered as necessary as ever to turn trade into such channels as would best tend to build up the nation’s wealth. As to imports the theories followed the lines that had been laid down in the earlier period and in the works of Laffemas and Montchrétien. Manufactured goods were not to be brought in.

By the Assembly of Notables of 1596 this maxim was applied especially to luxury fabrics, for “they asked that cloths of gold and of silk of foreign manufacture should not be allowed to come into the kingdom.”² To their request Henry IV acceded in an edict of 1599,³ although for practical reasons it was soon repealed.

In navigating the troubled seas of commercial theory the Estates General of 1614 took a similar tack, but the principle was applied more broadly. The *cahier* of the clergy begged the king to forbid foreign cloths, manufactures and luxury fabrics and to decree that people should use those made in the kingdom.⁴ Pearls and precious stones were likewise to be banned. “The Span-

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 209.

² Mayer, Vol. XVI, p. 21.

³ Isambert, Vol. XV, p. 212.

⁴ *Recueil des Cahiers etc.*, Vol. IV, p. 109.

ish and Flemish merchants," said the ecclesiastics, "who used to bring into this kingdom a great amount of gold and silver to pay for the goods that they came here to seek, such as linens, grains and the like which are necessary to them and which they cannot do without, bring now for the most part only pearls, diamonds and precious stones."¹ To prevent the excessive use of silks and silk stockings and the loss resulting to France therefrom the clergy asked that the importation of these goods be prohibited.² The third estate joined the clergy on the question of imports by making a sweeping recommendation. "Prohibitions should be made," said their *cahier*, "for all persons . . . against bringing in or causing to be imported into your kingdom any manufactured goods of gold, or silver, silk, wool, linen, and likewise laces or fringes or other manufactured articles of whatever sort." Such a step, they felt, would help manufactures, employ the idle and prevent the export of bullion.³ On the other hand, imports of raw materials were to be encouraged. Indigo, for instance, should be allowed to come in free of all duties to aid the dyeing industry in France.⁴

Exports

In regard to exports, the feeling continued in this period that all sorts of raw materials fit for manufac-

¹ *Ibid.*, Vol. IV, pp. 116-117.

² *Ibid.*, Vol. IV, p. 117.

³ *Ibid.*, Vol. IV, pp. 465-466. The Assembly of Notables of 1626 likewise asked for the prohibition of the importation of manufactured goods. See *Assemblée des Notables etc.*, p. 182.

⁴ *Recueil des Cahiers etc.*, Vol. IV, pp. 467-468.

ture should be retained in the kingdom. At the same time it was desired that staple goods be exported to swell the inflow of bullion. The clergy and the third estate of 1614 both advocated the complete prohibition of the export of unmanufactured materials. The clergy asked that "wool, hemp and other goods which" could "be made into finished products" should "not be taken out of the kingdom without having been made up";¹ while the commoners suggested that "prohibitions be made against exporting . . . into foreign lands any material suitable for manufacture."² As to the contrary feeling that certain exports should be encouraged, the third estate likewise made itself clear. They requested that the king restore the trade in woad which had formerly brought so much money into the realm.³ Salt, too, could be used to save money for the kingdom. For the king was urged, "to bring it about that the Swiss instead of providing themselves with salt in Franche Comté and Lorraine should use the salt of Pesquais . . . so as to sell the salt" of France, "increase the taxes" due the king, "and pay in salt if possible" what was being paid for in money.⁴

Shipping and Foreign Trade

More and more after the first decade of the seventeenth century questions of shipping and foreign trade occupied the minds of those in France who were thinking about economic matters. Before the third estate of

¹ *Ibid.*, Vol. IV, p. 109.

² *Ibid.*, Vol. IV, p. 465.

³ *Ibid.*, Vol. IV, p. 389.

⁴ *Ibid.*, Vol. IV, p. 395.

1614 there appeared a certain man, Barilli re by name, who wished to make a statement on sea power. France was wealthy, declared this individual, and "abounding in all things so that it could get along without all the neighboring kingdoms." Continuing, he cast aspersions on the memory of Francis I, saying that "instead of thinking about building and equipping vessels so as to make himself master of the seas, through lack of interest and feebleness of will he had ordered built at the gates of Paris a model of the prison in which he had been incarcerated, to his shame and that of all France and to the honor of the foreigner." Outraged at these reflections upon the character of "one of the greatest kings" of France the deputies refused to hear Barilli re further, and only by chance did that rash enthusiast escape condign punishment.¹

It was the lack of tact, however, not the underlying purpose behind the speech that the third estate disapproved, for they, too, were interested in questions pertaining to the sea. In their *cahier* they urged that the royal galleys in the Mediterranean increase their activity so that commerce might be better protected. Then, too, they asked the king to prevent the Spaniards from seizing French ships and sailors and from interfering with the departure of vessels which had sold their goods.² They requested further that all French merchants be permitted "to trade into the New France of Canada and throughout the whole extent of that country."³ Strenuously they objected to the two percent

¹ Mayer, Vol. XVII, p. 33 and ff.

² *Recueil des Cahiers etc.* Vol. IV, p. 175.

³ *Ibid.*, Vol. IV, p. 471.

tax levied by the Duke of Savoy on all French goods passing by Villa-Franca even when the ships did not stop there. Something must be done, they felt, to stop the daily piracies of the English, and of the freebooters who infested the Italian coast. Perhaps it would be wise for the king to indemnify his subjects for their losses abroad by seizing foreign goods in France. Or perhaps it would be better to issue letters of marque against the English and the Italians.¹ The nobles, too, wanted the royal galleys to guard the Mediterranean and thus to render "commerce more free and trade more certain."²

In the Assembly of Notables of 1626, however, far more than in the Estates of 1614, did questions of shipping and sea trade play a part. The very speech of welcome by the Keeper of the Seals was full of this topic. It was, in fact, an impassioned plea for France to gain her rightful place as a great naval power. The foreigners were, according to this official, getting away from France the fisheries, and winning control of the New World trade and of the seas:

"In which we are the more culpable in that we have in the kingdom all the commodities necessary to render us strong on the sea, enough even to furnish them to our neighbors, and we have, moreover, by the bounty of nature, advantages such that we can subject all our neighbors and make them depend on us.

¹ *Ibid.*, Vol. IV, pp. 473-475.

² *Ibid.*, Vol. IV, p. 247. It was during this period that a series of attempts was made to strengthen French commerce by the creation of companies for overseas trade on the model of the Dutch East India Company but with little success. See Levasseur, *Histoire du Commerce*.

"We have great woods, and iron for the construction of vessels, linens and hemp for sails and cordage, with which we furnish all neighboring areas. We have wheat for hardtack, wine, cider, beer, sailors and mariners in abundance, who, because they are not employed by us, go to serve our neighbors. We have the best ports in Europe and, what is especially noteworthy, we hold the key of all the sea commerce from the East to the West and from the North to the South."

If only the canal joining the Saone and the Seine were built, the importance of Gibraltar would be decreased, French trade with the Levant and Mediterranean ports would be increased, and France would become "the common depot of all the commerce of the earth."¹

In a special session held before the king, Leonor d'Estampes, Bishop of Chartres, speaking for the assembly struck the same note:

"There is nothing [said this dignitary] which serves more to increase this monarchy and to make it feared by foreign nations than to make it strong and powerful on the sea." "I cannot say except with shame that the subjects of Your Majesty in the least encounter on sea, from lack of strength, are forced to lower the banner of France, to endure all sorts of insults and to do homage to other crowns; that the French are exposed to continual depredations on the part of the Spanish, English, Flemish and the Algerian and Tunisian pirates, which have amounted in the last five or six years to more than thirty-six million *livres*; it is even known that the Dutch have borrowed the name of Turks to

¹ *Assemblées des Notables etc.*, pp. 32-33.

rob and pillage them [the French] with more impunity, and we are not unaware of the unjust treatment that they [the French] have received from these nations as if they had been declared enemies.

“Now, Sire, repairing past negligence and making yourself strong on the sea, it would be easy for Your Majesty to deliver himself from all this oppression; and thus to raise up the honor of France . . . which has fallen into scorn among foreign nations.”

The duties paid by the subjects on commerce obliged the king to protect them. Command of the sea would assure peace and safety on land. Other princes might be jealous of the French naval power, but the king should “put himself in a position to lay down the law for them rather than to receive it.” It could not be asserted that France lacked anything needful for naval supremacy :

“Because it is very certain that there is no place on earth where everything requisite for sea commerce is found so easily and in such abundance as in your kingdom; on the one side you have the ocean which encircles the majority of your provinces and an infinite number of navigable rivers, which like veins running through the body of France, render it fertile and suitable for commerce; and it seems also as if God had placed her [France] between Spain, Italy, Germany, England and other countries so that she might be their bountiful mother [*mère nourrice*], bearing on her bosom the horn of plenty which never was and never will be exhausted. On the other hand you have the sea of the Levant which opens to you the coast of Africa and Egypt and carries you into those rich countries of

Asia to which your subjects have access and in which they have advantages over other nations."

In closing, the bishop urged the king not to miss "the chance for so much glory" and not to scorn the advantages Nature had bestowed upon him. To the king two great seas were holding out their arms. By the vast numbers of his subjects who were idle and out of work was he implored and besought not to fail to seize the opportunity that was offered him.¹

In addition to the oratory which was displayed on several occasions concrete suggestions were laid before the Assembly of Notables in regard to shipping and foreign trade. These propositions were put in the form of queries: Whether the king ought to endure the depredations made continually on his subjects by foreigners; whether he ought not to maintain a permanent fleet to protect commerce; whether import and export duties should not be raised in retaliation for the high ones laid upon French traders abroad; and whether strong chartered companies should not be set up to carry on commerce as in other states. To these questions the assembly replied that it viewed with alarm the attacks on French shipping committed even in sight of the French coast "to the prejudice of the respect due to the flag and ensign of France." It approved, moreover, the king's design to give back to France "the treasures of the sea" which Nature had offered the country by so bountifully endowing it with all necessities. As to the duties, some advised treating with foreign nations to get them to lower their duties rather

¹ *Assemblée des Notables etc.*, pp. 208-214.

than raising the French levies out of hand. This matter was left to the discretion of the king. Treating the questions as a whole, the assembly thanked the king for propositions so important and necessary, for the safety of the coasts, the peace of the country, "the maintenance of authority over his subjects and the reputation and glory of the French name among foreign nations." It begged him to execute the plan "in all its parts," increasing his perseverance and firmness as the jealousy of the foreigners increased. Especially did the assembly favor the arming and support of a strong fleet and the creation of commercial companies. Further they requested the king to institute immediate prohibitions "of all foreign manufactures" and to use "all other good, just and politic means for the reestablishment and safety of commerce."¹

The third estate of 1614 had requested the king to negotiate through his ambassadors for treatment of French merchants abroad at least as lenient as that accorded foreigners in France.² But the Assembly of 1626 was more urgent in its complaints. The notables pointed out with disgust the existence of unfavorable conditions. "Our neighbors," claimed the Keeper of the Seals, "subject us to all the rigor of their laws. They set the prices on our goods and force us to take theirs on such conditions as are pleasing to them."³ "Contrary to treaties and agreements," declared the Bishop of Chartres, "the imposts [in foreign lands] have been increased for them [the French] or they

¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 181-182.

² *Recueil des Cahiers etc.* Vol. IV, pp. 472-473.

³ *Assemblées des Notables etc.*, p. 32.

have been obliged to give surety for their merchandise entering the ports of the Spaniards, to sell it at such a price as seems good to them [the Spanish] and to be paid in *cartilles* in changing which into sound money there is a loss of fifty percent." Even at that the Spaniards forced the French many times to take goods instead of money as payment, and on these goods they set their own price.¹

In all these animadversions on shipping and ocean-borne commerce in which the Assembly of Notables of 1626 indulged, it is possible perhaps to see the fine hand of Richelieu who had been created Grand-Master and Superintendent of the Marine only a few weeks before the gathering convened,² and who furthermore was present at some of the meetings at least.³ But it is also hard not to see both in the subject matter and the robust indignation which informed the discussions the effect of Montchrétien's writings so similar in content and in tone.

Writers Contemporary with Laffemas and Montchrétien

Laffemas and Montchrétien, Estates Generals and Assemblies, laws and edicts do not tell the whole story of the development of mercantilist thought for the four decades following the accession of Henry IV. A number of minor writers were turning their attention to questions of trade and industry. Sometimes their works were devoted in large part to economic matters.

¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 210-211.

² Isambert, Vol. XVI, pp. 194 ff.

³ *Assemblées des Notables etc.*, p. 5.

More often such subjects appeared as side channels of some other current. But nearly all in one way, or another reflected the mercantilist theories that were taking shape at this time.

L'Isle des Hermaphrodites was the rather sensational title of a work by Artus d'Ambry which appeared in 1605. It was a satire in which some have professed to see a belated attack on the fads and foibles of the court of Henry III. In the following year there came out a reply by one, Jonathas Petit de Bertigny, bearing the name of *L'Anti-Hermaphrodite*. Of it the greater part is devoted to patriotic eulogies on the king, the country and the church, and to a consideration of political questions. But there is one economic matter that troubles Bertigny deeply. It is the lack of specie in France. He complains bitterly of the employment of Swiss, English, Italian and German mercenaries who grow fat on the substance of the poor French and leave them drained of money which is "their life and their blood."¹ "The lack, want and scarcity of money has become so great in France," declares the author, "because of the money which goes out every year and does not come back at all."² Sheer lack of a medium of exchange has reduced prices to a ridiculous extent, so that in markets such as those of Burgundy, Auxerre and Tonnerre a *muid* of wine sells for only one hundred *sous*, a price which barely pays for the casks and taxes.³ Wheat and other agricultural products are left

¹ Bertigny, *L'Anti-Hermaphrodite etc.*, p. 24. Cf. p. 236.

² *Ibid.*, 5th Section, p. 18.

³ *Ibid.*, 5th Section, p. 19. The *muid* in Paris contained eighteen hundred litres. It varied in different districts.

on the producers' hands for lack of money to purchase them. "It is really bleeding the state," concludes Bertigny, ". . . to empty it of money."¹ He does not however tell how the situation is to be remedied.

On the eve of the meeting of the Estates General in 1614, a number of pamphlets appeared, some of which dealt with economic matters. An anonymous one, for instance, the *Advis . . . aux Estats Généraux . . . par six paysans* urges a number of actions upon the king, among them the establishment of commerce and the banishment of all Jews.² The request is likewise proffered that in the future use should not be made of foreigners in war. Since, say the peasants, "a Swiss costs more than six Frenchmen," and it is a "shame and reproach to France which has so many men not to be able to get along without her neighbors."³ Another suggestion is:

"That it be prohibited, on pain of death, for so many idlers to go on pilgrimages out of the kingdom, who take out of the kingdom into Spain and Italy more than a million in gold every year. Special request by St. Denis and his companion martyrs, St. Michel and St. Genevieve and others, who are worth at least as much as the foreign saints. Let justice be done them without waiting for the mandate of Rome."⁴

The impression of an anti-foreign bias given by this plea is reënforced by the demand that no more regular

¹ *Ibid.*, 5th Section, p. 20.

² *Advis . . . aux Estats Généraux . . . par six paysans*, pp. 22, 25.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 25.

⁴ *Ibid.*

ambassadors be sent or received by France, as special embassies for specific occasions are amply sufficient.¹

Another pamphlet appearing in the same year and for the same occasion is more important for a study of the economic theories of the time; it is also anonymous and bears the title *Advis au Roy en l'occurrence des Estats Généraux*.² The tenor and substance of the work is very clearly given by a summary appearing on the title page:

“The means to banish luxury from the kingdom; to establish a great number of manufactures in it; to prevent the export of money; and to cause to remain in the kingdom each year five millions in gold of the seven millions or thereabouts which are exported; and by so much to weaken some of the foreigners. To create, each year, an assured sum which can be destined for naval armament so as to be able to employ many of the nobility and people of valor. To avoid civil wars and make great progress and conquests. In short to make France one of the greatest and most redoubtable monarchies that ever was. All this for the glory of God and the grandeur of the king without decrease in or expense to his finances. For the common good of all his subjects without any expense to them. In fact, on the contrary, to lighten their expenses a great deal.”

The plan of this nameless author is simple in the extreme. Instead of continuing the friendly relations

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 32.

² Boissonnade, in *Le socialisme d'état*, p. 163, says that Montchrétien is perhaps the author of this *Advis au Roy*. There seems, however, to be some difference in style and in ideas between this pamphlet and the *Traicté*.

with Turkey which were established by Francis I, he wishes to stop the Levant trade, thus cutting down luxury within France and reducing the export of gold and silver. Then he would have France make war on various portions of the Turkish Empire, an undertaking which would keep the restless nobles and soldiers busy.

Commerce with the Levant is harmful to France since she sends thither specie instead of goods. "There is no year," claims the author, "in which there is not exported by the city of Marseilles alone more than seven million *écus* in money." "It is this which causes the lack of money in your [the king's] realm, where there is almost no money, and what little there is is foreign and of a much lower proportion of precious metal than yours."¹ The Levant trade is carried on largely by Italians and foreigners, who buy raw silk in the near East and take it to Genoa, Lucca, Milan and other Italian cities to be manufactured, and then carry the finished product to France. The French purchase the silks which have already paid heavy toll "both to the lands of the Turkish Emperor and the Italian cities, . . . and to the lands of the Duke of Saxony" through which they pass on the way to France.²

Marseilles is the center of the trade with Turkey and is a "refuge and retreat for numerous foreigners."

"It is a crime [insists the author] for subjects to transport money out of the kingdom as is done by that city, and in such quantities that what is exported each

¹ *Advis au Roy etc.*, p. 6.

² *Ibid.*, p. 8.

year to the Emperor of the Turks and to Italy amounts to more than seven million *écus* of coined money. A single ship will sometimes carry to the Levant more than three hundred thousand *écus* in one voyage. The city of Marseilles will not find permission for such trade listed among its privileges; nor that out of consideration for, or rather to fatten the foreigners (because they and not the natives of Marseilles carry on the chief trade in silks), the whole kingdom must suffer and fall into decay.”¹

There are three remedies for the situation. The first is to do away with the luxury that is sapping the strength of the country, luxury that is the “source of all impiety and the ruin of monarchies and commonwealths,”² luxury “the monster” that is ruining France.³ The wearing of silk should be forbidden to the general populace, although it may be wise to allow a year of grace before enforcing such an edict.⁴ The nobles, even, can dress in scarlet cloth ornamented with gold buttons, both to be made in France.⁵ The French “plunged into luxury” have “abandoned the modesty and decency which still existed in the reign of Louis XII.” But if the proper legislation is put into force, and the citizens will take their cue from the inhabitants of the wealthy cities of Venice and Genoa, where all dress simply, there is still hope.⁶ If luxury is banished, that step alone will keep in France five of the seven

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 45.

² *Ibid.*, p. 7.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 10-11.

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 36-37.

⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 12-13.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

million *ecus* that are exported annually.¹ "It is the way," declares the author, "to stop the export of money which will remain in your kingdom after [luxury is ended] and will no longer be taken into the lands of the Emperor of the Turks nor into Italy, which countries will in consequence become, by so much, the weaker."²

The second remedy is to forbid the importation of "silk manufactures and foreign cloths," while a similar prohibition should be directed against precious stones and pearls "of which," thinks this writer, "your kingdom is only too full."³ "The Spaniards will be forced the more to pay in ready cash for wheat and cloth in that their precious stones and ornaments will no longer be allowed to come into your kingdom."⁴ Of course the prohibition of the importation of silks may lead to an increased demand for high grade Flemish textiles but that will cause no difficulty, for they will be shut out too:

"It is no small thing to prevent the foreigners from growing great and rich from our wealth; if these materials, the great quantity of lace and embroideries, which are today so expensive, were not allowed to come into the kingdom, we would not have to wait long to see the Flemish quite astonished both because their artisans would not earn a living and because of the decrease which would occur in the export duties that the Archduke lays on such things."⁵

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 43-44.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 34.

The second remedy leads directly to the third, for if foreign cloths and luxury articles are kept out, the French will have to manufacture such things for themselves. The establishment of these industries would employ large numbers of the people and would increase the fiscal duties of the royal exchequer.¹ Even in the case of silks it would no longer be necessary to have recourse to foreigners, "because," as this writer remarks, "there is enough manufactured in the kingdom for the clothes of princes and princesses and nobles and ladies and others whom Your Majesty might wish to permit to wear silk clothes." As for the raw silk, France could produce part; the rest could be obtained from Sicily.² Under this system money would remain in the realm, since what the Spanish paid for wheat, wine, and cloths would not go out again to Turkey and Italy.³ As for the taxes, would not the French who are handing over so much to foreigners, gladly pay one fourth as much to their own king on equally good textiles which would sell at one third of the existing prices? A moderate tax on these new manufactures would raise sufficient money to increase greatly the power and repute of France. Such taxes could be levied at the manufacturing and dyeing establishments and would be far easier to collect than wine, salt or export duties.⁴ As for certain silk articles like stockings, of which the use is well established, especially for summer, it might be difficult to put a stop to the wearing of

¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 7, 14.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 14, 15.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 30-33.

them. They could however be made at home. Then, points out the author, "We would have to have recourse neither to Milan nor to Genoa, and then the artisans of the kingdom who manufacture them would want to make them well when they saw that people were no longer getting them elsewhere."¹

Once luxury is reduced, foreign cloths forbidden and manufactures established, the economic condition of the country will be far sounder. Minor problems can easily be settled. If for instance the cessation of trade with the Levant produces a scarcity of spices, which are, moreover, harmful if used in too great quantities, they can be obtained from Portugal, Spain or Holland. Better yet the French could form an organization of their own like the Dutch East India Company to trade with the far East.² But one great problem that is vexing France will remain. It is the disorder occasioned by civil war and internal disturbances. The general solution is obvious. "It is also the way," declares the author, "to suppress troubles and civil wars which occur in states and monarchies to send the subjects to foreign wars, and none is so just as one against the enemies of the Christian faith and name."³

Now the prohibition of trade between France and Turkey would greatly weaken the latter country, giving rise there doubtless to turmoil and disorder.⁴ The Turks are lords of many fair and rich lands on the Mediterranean; Greece, Rhodes, Asia Minor, Egypt, North

¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 34-35.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 17-19, 46.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 38.

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 41-42, 44.

Africa beckon the French to deeds of valor and conquest.¹ The Turks are, moreover, infidels. An expedition against them would partake of the nature of a Crusade. It would be an effort "to increase the Christian faith and to retrieve lands and holy places that the infidel Turks" hold.² France is admirably situated for such an expedition. On her southern, Mediterranean, coast could be built up a large navy, with a nucleus of royal galleys reënforced by the ships of private citizens lured by the chance of gain.³ If the king wishes to make his sea forces appropriate to his grandeur and to that of his state he can easily construct as many as forty or fifty galleys, or perhaps even a hundred once luxury is banished from his realm.⁴ For the people will pay taxes gladly when the proceeds are to be used for "the glory of God, the increase of the Christian name," the greatness of the king, and "to avoid troubles and civil wars."⁵

The king himself will indubitably find great delight in the exploits of his forces. It will give him "very great pleasure and satisfaction" to hear from day to day about the deeds of his "courageous subjects, of whom some" will have "taken a city or place, others fought and captured galleys and galleons."⁶ The nobility, born to be employed in wars, will find itself fully occupied. Furthermore, those who fight in such a conflict will be all the braver in that they will have the hope

¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 23-24.

² *Ibid.*, p. 37.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 26-27.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 28.

⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 30-31.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 37.

of "honor on earth and afterwards happiness and felicity in Heaven."¹

The Turkish alliance was entered into by Francis I through fear of Spain. But at last France and Spain are friends; and at any rate France is far stronger than her neighbor across the Pyrenees. It is not unreasonable to hope that all Christian princes will rally around Louis XIII in his glorious emprise. Places like Malta will be glad to serve as bases. One of the first efforts might be directed against the Barbary pirates who are always harassing French commerce. To defeat them would add prestige to the already lustrous name of the ruler of France.²

In fact if this plan is carried out in its entirety, that is to say, if luxury is banished, foreign articles excluded, manufactures established, and a crusade of conquest launched against the Turks, all of France will benefit save only the city of Marseilles, and those individuals who are French consuls in Syria.³ The plight of Marseilles is not to be taken too seriously, since the trade of that city is largely carried on by foreigners and since "all well-ordered monarchies have been especially careful that foreigners should not grow great and rich from the property of native-born subjects."⁴ After all, special cases are not to be considered when the welfare of all France is in the balance. If the king will only adopt and follow out this plan all three orders of the state will bless him, "the ecclesiastics to see an

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 38.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 22, 38-41.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 45-47.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 30. See also pp. 46-47.

action for the glory of God and the increase of Christianity; the nobles an open road for the acquisition of honor and répute; the third estate to see manufactures restored in this kingdom; and all together to behold luxury banished and the poor artisans employed.”¹ Under this plan the warlike can fight in the Levant, the commercially minded can trade with the Indies and build up a company like that of the Dutch, all France will grow great and prosperous, and the king will gain in power and reputation.²

A political treatise, the *Discours sur les moyens de bien gouverner* by Gentillet, published in 1620, has far less to say about economic matters than the *Advis au Roy*. But it shows a trend away from the cosmopolitanism of Bodin toward the anti-foreign attitude of Montchrétien. Gentillet hopes that the “good and loyal Frenchmen will strive to restore the fine reputation of our nation which some degenerates and foreigners have soiled and spotted.”³ All the troubles of France have, according to this author, come from a too generous reception of Italians and other foreigners who have sucked out the substance of the country and exhausted its finances. The foreigners shear the French like sheep. The Italians in particular corrupt them.⁴ Gentillet feels that the wealth of a country consists in goods, money and a large population.⁵ He opposes all luxury in dress, food and manner of living.⁶

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 44.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 46, 47, etc.

³ Gentillet, *Discours sur les moyens, etc.*, p. 13.

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 13-14, see also p. 586.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 885 ff.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 893.

In a work appearing in the same year as that of Gentillet, under the title of *Le Denier Royale*, the author, Scipion de Gramont, discusses the Bodin-Malestroit controversy at some length. He finds the former right in emphasizing the abundance of gold and silver as an important factor in the rise in prices. But he accords his approval to the latter also for pointing out the debasement of coinage as the reason for a large part of the apparent rise.¹ He claims, however, that the actual prices make little difference since goods are as abundant as ever and since a given quantity of wheat will buy just as much as it formerly could.²

To Gramont the abundance of the precious metals in France is due to the large quantities of wheat and other goods purchased by the Spaniards who have turned to military rather than productive activities:³

“France has two cords, or rather two magnets to attract them [gold and silver] to her as she does every year; namely the wheat which the Spaniards come to load up with at our ports both on the ocean and on the Mediterranean Sea, and the cloth and hemp for the sails and cordage of the fleets which are fitted out at Lysbonne and at Seville; besides these she has two others which are the wines and salt, to attract money from her other neighbors such as England and Flanders, without counting the woad from Languedoc which has given much foreign money to France.”⁴

¹ Gramont, *Le Denier Royale*, p. 73 ff.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 108, 120, etc.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 112-114. It is hard to reconcile the divergent opinions as to whether or not France had sufficient specie on hand in this period.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 136.

Although France contains considerable quantities of the precious metals, a future shortage is not impossible. The mines of the new world like Potosi are bound to run out eventually, and the gold and silver in the country are continually being used up. Bullion is lost in various ways; by the use of it in embroideries, cloth of gold, cloth of silver and brocades, by gilding articles, by making gold and silver ware and jewelry, by hoarding (usually a temporary loss), by shipwrecks, and by burying treasure and forgetting it.¹ These losses are more or less natural and inevitable, but there are still more serious ones owing to commerce and trade. There are certain countries, declares Gramont, "which, having no mines, are forced by the sterility of the land which cannot nourish them to exchange" gold and silver for food:

"Such would be Spain without the gold from the Indies, because she spends much more gold for wheat than she gets from her wool. Such would be the city of Genoa without the trade and energy of its inhabitants. And although our France has, as we have said above, two great doors by which the money of foreigners enters, which are grains and wines; there are, however, so many others by which it goes out that I am amazed that there is a *sou* left; because there go out every year more than two millions to Constantinople, carried by the people of Marseilles; Italy ravishes us of at least as much through cloth of gold and of silver, the tinsel and embroideries of Milan, the velvets, the satins, the silk hose. The court of Rome takes much from us by annates, bulls and dispensa-

¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 137-177.

tions, which amounts to a million of gold each year . . . without counting what the French who go to see Italy carry there every year, never bringing back more than enough for their journey.”¹

Sometimes money went out of France in great lump sums, as for the ransoms of St. Louis, King John, and Francis I. In such cases the loss was “much greater than if the kings had spent ten times the amount in buildings or even in superfluous things,” for then the money would have remained in the kingdom.² Great losses are occasioned by warlike expeditions. The crusades cost France immense sums, the Italian wars of the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries transferred at least twenty millions from France into Italy.³ Thus in general Gramont shows a good mercantilist pre-occupation with the precious metals and the problem of how to keep them in the country. But, influenced by Bodin, he is somewhat less disturbed at the prospect of a future shortage of gold and silver than he might otherwise be.

In striking contrast to the rather anti-foreign tone of *Le Denier Royale* is the cosmopolitanism shown in *Le Nouveau Cynée* by Émeric Crucé, published only three years later (1623). Crucé’s work and his plan for international peace anteceded by fifteen years and probably inspired in part the “Grand Design” of Sully’s *Mémoires*. Crucé glorifies the function of the merchant. “Agriculture supports a state,” he says, “trade increases

¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 189-190.

² *Ibid.*, p. 191.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 191-192.

it." "There is no calling comparable in utility with that of merchant."¹ Kings should make provisions so that their subjects might "trade both by land and sea without any fear."² He hopes for "a universal peace of which the most beautiful fruit is the establishment of commerce."³ Crucé wishes to see rivers made navigable, canals constructed and men going from country to country with no formalities as if the world were one great city.⁴ No distinction should be made between native and foreign merchants, as after the establishment of universal peace conditions will be the same everywhere for all peoples.⁵ Indeed it would even be desirable to have uniform weights and measures and coinage in all nations.⁶

As for taxation, Crucé believes that both import and export levies are justifiable; but export taxes should be laid especially on necessities and import taxes on luxuries, delicacies and superfluous articles.⁷ He opposes wars as too costly.⁸ He urges that the idle be put to productive work.⁹ Luxury is the bane of the state, but edicts against it are ineffectual. The real solution is for kings and nobles to set an example of simplicity.¹⁰

¹ Crucé, *Le Nouveau Cynée*, pp. 29-30. The "old" Cineas was a favorite minister of Pyrrhus, king of Epirus, with whom he held a famous conversation outlining various ambitious projects.

² *Ibid.*, p. 33.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 32.

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 33-36.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 172.

⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 205 ff.

⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 31, 171-172.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 28-29.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 128-129.

According to Crucé the debasement of coinage is a crying evil. In fact it would be desirable to increase rather than to decrease the amount of precious metals in the coins of the realm, for then the foreigners who have gold and silver would have to give more for necessary goods like wheat and wines, instead of getting them in exchange for useless articles like pearls, silks and perfumes.¹ Crucé's plan for international peace is interesting if a trifle visionary. Some city is to be chosen where all the kings can keep ambassadors who will confer together and settle disputes. First place in the assembly will be granted to the representative of the pope, second to the emissary of the Emperor of the Turks.²

More practical and more significant in a study of economic theory was a work which appeared in 1652. In that year an Assembly of Notables had been summoned. To guide it in its work the report of a similar gathering held from December, 1626, to February, 1627, was published, together with an anonymous document dating from 1626, addressed to the earlier meeting and entitled *Advis à Messieurs de l'Assemblée des Notables*.

In the *Advis* a large portion of the pages is devoted to a consideration of economic reforms. In the first place it seems advisable to the author that taxes be reduced. Any resulting deficit can be made up by levies on "what enters and leaves the kingdom so that foreigners alone" will "bear the expense."³ This is not

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 195 ff.

² *Ibid.*, p. 60 ff.

³ *L'Assemblée des Notables etc.*, p. 7.

only a possible but an infallible means of solving the financial difficulties of the land:

“France has⁶ this good fortune that she can easily do without her neighbors; her neighbors cannot get along without her. Spain has no wheat, what comes from Danzig is nearly worthless, beside the fact that it is almost completely spoiled when it arrives in her ports because of the length of the journey. The whole north is without wine; our salts, our dyes, our fabrics, our cordage, our ciders go all over the world and are not produced in abundance save among us. The duties [export] can be raised frankly to such a point as the king pleases without any fear. Necessity will still force them [the goods] to be bought from us. Do you wish for an example that cannot be denied? About thirty years ago the tun of wine was worth sixty to eighty *écus* at Bordeaux. The English, the Scotch, the Dutch took it all at that price. Now it is worth only fifteen or sixteen *écus*. Why suffer this gain at our expense? Yes, but they, in their turn, will increase the prices of the merchandise which they sell to us. Please examine the quality of these [goods] and then you will judge how important they can be for us. No money comes to us from England for anything. Those who have been at Bordeaux at the time of the fairs can bear witness to that. They bring cloths, serges, some lead and tin and with these they take away our goods. The Dutch furnish us in part with sugars, drugs, and spices. The silks come to us from the Levant. Germany furnishes us with horses, Italy with manufactures. All these things are so little needed that it would be proper to forbid absolutely the importation of them. Why is it necessary that Milan, Lucca, Genoa and Florence should sell to us at such high prices their silks and

cloth of gold and of silver which serve only for luxury and consequently for the ruin of the state. The city of Paris alone consumes more of them than the whole of Spain. King Henry II was the first to wear silk stockings, which he did at the wedding of his sister. Now, there is no valet so insignificant that he does not feel himself dishonored to wear stockings of serge, and that is where all the money of France goes to. Marseilles does not have any trade bigger than that [in silk]. What danger is there then that they will raise the prices of their merchandise? By that means perhaps we will learn to clothe ourselves in our woolens and to make use of our cloths. Let the infinite number of carriages which shake the walls of all the cities of France and especially of Paris be forbidden, and then the horses of Germany which are employed only for this purpose will be of no further use, with the result that we will be able to do without them entirely. May it please the king to order that in all the priories and abbeys of France there should be a horse breeding establishment. . . . Up till now there has been so little care for the public interest that the Frenchman has never learned to make use of the advantages that God has given him over all the other nations of the world. So little sugar, spices, and drugs are really needed that high prices [in these goods] would not be an inconvenience to us; in addition that would force our merchants to undertake the voyage to the Indies like our neighbors.

“Gentlemen, seize the opportunity on this point of representing to the king that he is obliged by the greatness and reputation of his state to reestablish commerce. For that purpose there are two things to be done; first to get rid of these vermin, officials, who rob everybody. . . . Next it is necessary to institute a gen-

eral regulation of sea commerce. Is it not a shame that in three hundred leagues of coast there are not twenty French vessels? And nevertheless if it pleases you to start the work we will be in a short time master of the sea and will lay down the law to those islanders who usurp this title. We have more harbors by far than they, more wood, and better than they for shipbuilding, more sailors, in proof of which note that they use on their voyages only our Biscayans, or our Bretons or Normans. The linen, cloths, the cordage, the ciders, the wines, the salt meats, necessary supplies, are found in our lands. There remains only to give form, to plan; the material is more than ample. Here is a proposition for it, use it if you do not find a better one, it does not matter to me so long as the thing is done and the public profits by it. Let the King, by edict, order that in each capital city of his provinces the merchants shall form a company for sea commerce on the model of that of Amsterdam, and shall equip a certain number of ships in the nearest and most convenient ports; and to encourage them more let them be granted great privileges, as, among others, that a rebate of one tenth be given to French ships which without fraud enter and clear from our ports, and that it be forbidden on pain of confiscation of body and goods for our sailors to go to work for foreigners. In a short while you will create an immense fleet and cover the sea with sails; and you will employ a number of the young nobility who are staying at home and becoming degenerate."¹

The works treated thus far in this section were written for the most by obscure or unknown men. One book, however, the *Mémoires* of Sully, demands attention not only because of the ideas on economic topics

¹ *L'Assemblée des Notables etc.*, pp. 7-9.

expressed therein, but also on account of the distinction of its author.¹ It is difficult to place in any chronological system the theories expressed in the *Mémoires*. Published probably in 1638, written in the ten or fifteen years preceding, they deal largely with the reign of Henry IV (1589-1610).² The book was written in an unusual manner. To four or more secretaries Sully turned over a vast mass of letters, notes, memoranda. They sorted, collected and edited these documents and from them worked out a more or less consecutive story of the doings of Henry IV and of his greatest minister. This narrative is addressed to Sully, and he is referred to in the second person throughout, thus producing a singular effect. Had the compilers of the *Mémoires*

¹ Maximilien de Béthune, duc de Sully, was born at the Château of Rosny near Mantes in 1560. Son and heir of the Huguenot baron de Rosny, he was brought up in the reformed faith. In 1571 Maximilien joined the court of Henry of Navarre. During the succeeding years he studied in Paris and fought in the religious wars. In 1583 he became Henry's agent at Paris. He was wounded at Ivry (1590). Although he refused to do so himself, he advised Henry to become a Catholic. As Member of the Council of Finance and Superintendent of Finance Rosny undertook and carried through many reforms in administration, by some of which he managed to save Henry IV over a million *livres* a year. Among other positions he held those of Commissioner of Highways and Public Works, Grand Master of Artillery, Superintendent of Fortifications, Governor of Mantes, of the Bastille and of Poitou. In 1606 Rosny was created duc de Sully. He was active in internal developments such as the draining of swamps, the building of roads, bridges and canals and the reorganization of the army. After the death of Henry IV, Sully gradually withdrew into private life. He was made a Marshal of France in 1634. In 1641 he died.

² Another curious feature of the book is that although it was printed on Sully's country estate, the title page gives the fictitious names of the alleged printers and locates the place of publication as Amsterdam.

been dependent on documents alone, the ideas in the work could be dated with some accuracy. But Sully was there to edit, correct, suggest and above all recollect with facile memory. His outlook on life had changed considerably in his years of retirement, and he was, moreover, anxious that he should appear in a good light. In fact the book bears something of the stamp of an apologia. It is, therefore, only tentatively and with cautious reservations, that the various economic notions mentioned in the *Mémoires* can be attributed to the reign of Henry IV. Probably many of them derive in part at least from the period 1610-1630.

While the book deals largely with politics, economic ideas crop out here and there. For instance Sully disapproves of the prohibition of foreign manufactures not on theoretical grounds but because of the practical difficulties. He prophesies the failure of the attempt of 1599 in that direction, and triumphs when his prognostications are fulfilled.¹ On the other hand, this minister is strongly in favor of legislation forbidding the export of gold and silver. He even joins the hunt for evaders of the law, and tells with some glee of how he made for himself forty-seven thousand écus from a single capture. In fact it does not seem impossible that the profit motive outweighed any theoretical considerations.² To Sully the plan for settlements in Canada seems most unwise as he claims that "Great wealth was never derived from places beyond forty degrees [of

¹ Sully, *Mémoires des sages et royales économies etc.*, in *Nouvelle collection de mémoires etc.*, ed. by Michaud and Poujoulat (Paris, 1854), Vol. 16, p. 317.

² *Ibid.*, p. 371 (Vol. 16), cf. p. 404 (Vol. 16).

north latitude]." ¹ On the other hand, he approves heartily of the project of a canal joining the Atlantic and Mediterranean as the existence of such a route would weaken Spain and strengthen France.²

In one document Sully gives a long list of factors that tend to enfeeble a state; among them, decrease in trade and commerce; decrease in agriculture and manufacturing; debasement of coinage; "vanities, curiosities, luxuries, excesses, and pleasures"; tolerance of vice, luxury, ostentation, and excessive feasts; idle, sluggish, and voluptuous lives.³ In other connections also, Sully inveighs against luxury in clothes, jewels, buildings, horses, carriages, and weddings.⁴ The plan for a general European peace which Sully depicts as occupying much of his own and Henry's time while not economic in essence still implied a lack of antiforeign bias which could not be without some economic reverberations.⁵

But perhaps the most interesting section of Sully's *Mémoires* is that in which the attitude of this minister toward the reforms of Laffemas is brought out. It is reported in the form of a conversation between Henry and Sully in 1603:

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 516 (Vol. 16). It is interesting to note, however, that Quebec was founded in 1608.

² *Ibid.*, p. 558 (Vol. 16).

³ *Ibid.*, p. 586 (Vol. 16).

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 372 (Vol. 16).

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 150 ff etc. (Vol. 17); p. 429 (Vol. 16), etc.

It is generally held now that Sully's *Grand Design* is the product of his years of retirement, references to it being introduced by him into otherwise authentic documents of the reign of Henry IV. See, e.g., Lavis, *Histoire de France*, Vol. 6, part 2, pp. 123-125.

“The king wishing to establish in his kingdom the raising of mulberry trees, the art of silk and all sorts of foreign manufactures which were not made in this country, for that purpose caused to be brought in at great expense workers in all these crafts, and to be constructed large buildings to house them; you [i.e., Sully] did everything you could to prevent all that, but he desired it passionately. He came to you about it at the Arsenal one day and said, ‘I don’t know what fancy has taken hold of you, so that you wish, as I am told, to oppose yourself to what I want to establish for my own satisfaction, the embellishment and enrichment of my realm and to remove idleness from among my people.’

“‘Sire,’ you replied to him, ‘as regards your satisfaction, I would deeply regret to oppose myself to it formally, whatever it might cost; because having endured so many labors, difficulties, troubles and dangers from your birth to the present, it is quite reasonable, now that your state is quiet and that things are going better in all sections, that you should also have some pleasure and recreation . . . if the expense were not excessive; . . . but to say that to your pleasure is joined the convenience, the embellishment and enrichment of your kingdom and your peoples, that is what I cannot understand. If it please Your Majesty to listen patiently to my reasons, I am sure, knowing as I do the quickness of your wit, and the soundness of your judgment, that you will agree with me.’

“‘Go ahead, I wish it indeed,’ said the king, ‘I’m glad to hear your reasons but also I want you to listen to mine afterwards because I am sure they are better than yours. . . .’

“‘As for my reasons since it pleases Your Majesty

to take the trouble to listen to them, I will mingle them with arguments, which though you may scorn them now, you will perhaps regret in the future not having considered more carefully. Because in the first place, Sire, Your Majesty must realize that as there are different climates, regions and countries, so does it seem likewise that God wished to have them supplied variously with possessions, commodities, goods, materials, special and exclusive arts and crafts, which are not common to all, or at least not as good in other places, so that by trade and commerce in these things (of which some have an abundance and others a lack) intercourse, communication, and human association might be maintained between nations however far they might be from one another, as the long voyages to the East and West prove. In the second place it is essential to examine whether this kingdom has not a climate, a situation, an elevation of the sun, a temperate atmosphere, a quality of the land, and a natural inclination of the peoples which are contrary to the designs of Your Majesty. In the third place there is the question whether the season of spring here is not too cold, humid and late both for the hatching and raising of silk worms and for supplying mulberry leaves to feed them, of which it would be impossible to obtain a sufficient quantity in five or six years no matter what diligence was exhibited in sowing and planting. And in the fourth place there is the question whether the employment of your subjects in this sort of life which seems meditative, idle and sedentary rather than active will not render them unused to that toilsome, difficult and laborious life in which they have need to be trained to make good soldiers; as I have heard Your Majesty say many times that it is among such people of toil and labor that one finds the best fighters; that having in a

productive state so much good land with which France is in general better provided than any other kingdom in the world (except that of Egypt) of which the great products consist of grains, vegetables, wines, dyes, oils, ciders, salts, flax, hemp, wool, linens, woolens, sheep, hogs, and mules, is the cause of all the gold and silver which enters into France, and that consequently these occupations are worth more than all the silk and silk goods which are produced in Sicily, Spain or Italy; and also the establishment [of the manufacture] of these scarce and rich stuffs, far from aiding your peoples and enriching your state, would lead them into the luxury, the pleasure, the idleness and the excessive expenditure which have always been the chief causes of the ruin of kingdoms and commonwealths, denuding them of loyal, valiant and hardy soldiers of whom Your Majesty has more need than of all these little good-for-nothing coxcombs of the court and cities, clothed in gold and purple. Because, as for the export of gold and silver out of your kingdom, already so often alleged by those who propose the establishment of the rich and expensive foreign stuffs, there is nothing so easy as to avoid it without any harm to anyone at all, [by] forbidding all display and luxury and reducing all persons of all stations, men, women and children alike, in regard to their personal clothing, their furniture, buildings, dwellings, plants, gardens, jewels, silver vessels, horses, carriages, equipages, servants, gildings, paintings, stucco or marble work, marriages, purchase of offices, banquets, feasts, perfumes, and other superfluities to what was practiced in the times of kings Louis XI, Charles VIII and Louis XIII, especially as regards those people connected with justice, administration and finance, and secretaries, and bourgeois who

are the ones who today indulge in the most luxury.¹ During those reigns it is well known that chancellors, first presidents, government secretaries and the most important financiers had only modest lodgings without slates, bricks, stucco or marble work, gildings or paintings; did not wear silk materials richer than taffetas, and the wives of some of them wore plain cloth hoods; they had neither costly tapestries nor silken beds nor vessels of silver, nor even plates; they gave only small weddings for their children; they had relatives and friends in to meals only if each one of them brought his share to the table; and by excess of these things there is now consumed ten times more gold and silver than all that causes so much worry because it is exported from here for manufactures of foreign countries.'

" 'Are these,' the king then said to you, 'the good reasons that you were to explain to me. Ho! Mine are better, being in short that I wish to experiment with the propositions that are made to me, and I would rather fight the king of Spain in three pitched battles than all those people of justice and finance, secretaries and city folk, and especially all their wives and daughters whom you would throw on my hands by so many odd rules, which I think I shall put off till another year.'

" 'Then since such is your absolute wish, Sire,' you said, 'I won't talk about it any more and time and experience will teach you that France is not fit for such playthings.' "²

¹ This is a good example of the fairly common belief that the habits of a people could be changed by royal fiat, despite the repeated failure of edicts on dress and luxury.

² Sully, *Mémoires etc.*, pp. 514-516 (Vol. 16).

Thus Sully took his stand against the new industries that Laffemas was advocating. Although he did not approve of the innovation of silk culture Sully did urge the value of agriculture in general. At least such is his version of his attitude in 1603. That the passage may possibly have been inspired by the subsequent partial failure of the efforts toward industrialization is indicated by a contemporary comment. For Marbault in connection with the passage quoted declares :¹

“And as for the manufactures and the mulberry projects, our author [Sully], knowing that the king took pleasure in them, endeavored beyond all others to promote them and to give him new plans, listened to all those who proposed plans, knowing that His Majesty desired to establish all sorts of arts and ornamental improvements and that he was making himself agreeable [to the king] ; that is why he proposed and obtained the planting of elms along all the highways under rigorous penalties against those who did not comply ; and these elms were called *Rosnys* by the people. Now that he has seen by the result that that² has not succeeded he condemns it and says that it was against his advice.”

¹ Marbault, *Remarques sur les mémoires etc.*, p. 69. Of course Marbault is an exceedingly hostile critic.

² The pronoun seems to refer to the projects in general not elm planting in particular. The idea of planting elms (and nut trees) along the highways did not originate with Sully. Such a step was urged by royal letters patent in 1552 and again in the Estates General of 1576.

CONCLUSION

What was mercantilism in France in 1629? What had it come to connote to those interested in economic topics? Queries framed in this fashion cannot be answered. Mercantilism at that time was not an abstract entity like the idea of divine right monarchy. Nor was it a well-knit system of economic philosophy with the parts fitting into each other and properly subordinated to the whole, such as Marxian socialism. Nor yet was it a closely reasoned body of doctrines, based on axioms and proceeding by logic to theorems and corollaries after the fashion of Euclidean geometry.

Mercantilism is, rather, the name applied by later students to an agglomeration of more or less related practices, theories, beliefs and hypotheses. No one ever built all these components into a unified whole. The syllogistic expositions current today are fictions of over-simplification created for pedagogical purposes. In France the ideas that go to make up what is called mercantilism became common, or came to be commonly applied to the problems of the national state during the period from the middle of the fifteenth century to the early decades of the seventeenth. As these notions became prevalent, some were seized upon by one individual or group, others by another. Some writers or thinkers had only one or two of the conceptions that can be called mercantilist. Others like Laffemas or

Montchrétien formed into rough, and as they fondly believed, practical systems a large number of related tenets. Progressing from the scattered concepts of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries mercantilism achieved in the early seventeenth century the status of an organized though somewhat amorphous body of postulates, convictions and precepts.

This progress and the mercantilist ideas themselves are both reflected in a variety of sources—laws, reports of assemblies, pamphlets, books, memoirs and the like, of which some have been examined in the chapters of this study. From such an examination, by a subsumption not too artificial, it is possible to point out the main topics about which mercantilist theories tended to accrete in France before 1629. In number these subjects were fifteen: bullionism, luxury, self-sufficiency, population, the idle poor, agriculture, mines, industry, commerce, imports, exports, foreign trade, colonies, sea power, and the treatment of foreigners. Each of these topics was related to others, and under each of them were a number of subordinate ideas.

Of the mercantilist concepts, one of the most basic was bullionism, or as some modern French writers prefer to call it, chryshedonism. Precious metals were seldom considered the only form of wealth, but they were esteemed highly as the source of power for a country. Influenced by the shining example of Spain, and giving little heed to Bodin's writings, many Frenchmen held that the strength of a nation depended on the amount of gold and silver that could be gathered within its boundaries, and that therefore it was desirable for a state to acquire large supplies of the precious metals

if it could possibly do so. In general the theorists like Bodin and Montchrétien were more cautious in their bullionism than the men of affairs like Laffemas or Sully, who tacitly or explicitly accepted the high worth of gold and silver as a major premise on which to base their plans and projects. Bullionism led directly to a fairly widespread desire to prohibit legally the export of the precious metals, although many had begun to feel by the seventeenth century that it was impossible to enforce such laws and that other methods were more efficacious in increasing the amount of gold and silver in a country.

Indirectly bullionism led to an increased interest in the problem of luxury. From early times undue ostentation in dress and manner of life was frowned upon as contrary to Christian humility, as tending to replace class distinctions by a differentiation based on wealth, and as apt to ruin financially the foolish or incompetent. To these considerations bullionism added the thought that in many luxury articles gold and silver were consumed, and that since such goods were for the most part imported into France and paid for in money, the use of them tended to decrease the supply of gold and silver. As the sources of the attention paid to luxury were diverse, so the remedies suggested were likewise varied. Of them the most common was the plan to have all excess in clothes and ways of life banned by royal authority. A second corrective measure proposed was to forbid the importation of all luxury goods and especially of costly fabrics. The third panacea and perhaps that most pregnant with consequences was the proposal that France make for herself all the luxury articles and

fabrics that she needed, thus avoiding at least the export of money to foreign lands. It was in line with this last suggestion that Laffemas carried on most of his propaganda and made a tremendous effort to introduce silk culture and manufacture into France. There may even be some connection between the fact that Laffemas and others in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries sought so ardently to make France a producer of luxuries, and the fact that since the seventeenth century France has supplied a large part of the world with its luxury goods.

It was not in articles of vain display, alone, that the mercantilists wished to make France independent of other lands. They longed to see everything used in the country produced there. To be dependent on foreigners for anything at all was in itself a cause for shame and disgust; it also cost money. It was, therefore, a source of pride to the French that their land was naturally so well endowed. Its temperate climate was not only pleasant for the inhabitants, it was likewise good for the crops. Many writers expatiated with joy on the wonderful wealth of France, her fertility, her size, her varied soil, her rivers, her geographic position. With glee it was pointed out repeatedly that she could get along without any of her neighbors, while they all needed her products, and that a self-sufficient country, selling its surplus abroad was bound to reap a harvest of gold.

Of the resources of which France could boast, one of the most important to the early mercantilists was the vast size of her population. The wealth of a nation depended upon that of its people; naturally, then, it was

an advantage to have a numerous citizenry to achieve these individual riches. A large population was furthermore a source of strength in time of war and of productivity in time of peace. The infinite numbers of the French merchants, peasants, sailors, and artisans were thus a ground for intense satisfaction.

All the French were not, however, productively engaged. There was a large class of unemployed, poverty-stricken vagabonds, sturdy beggars, idle mendicants. Idleness was in itself a sin and the mother of all vices. Charity to the poor was often misdirected and merely aggravated the situation. To those who considered the problem, the remedy was clear. The poor should be made to work. Whether they were employed on public construction, and in workhouses, or forced to find jobs for themselves was not the chief consideration. It was essential only that the idle poor be made industrious and self-supporting. Were this done the productive powers of the nation would be greatly increased.

In addition to a large and industrious population there were other elements of national wealth that were important, agricultural resources for instance. It is a common misconception, superinduced by a desire to make a contrast with the physiocrats, that mercantilists glorified industry to the point of neglecting agriculture. Nothing could be much further from the truth in regard to the early French mercantilists.¹ Almost without exception they pointed with pride to the agricultural wealth of France, actual or potential. That foreign nations depended on France for products such

¹ English mercantilism included protection for agriculture in the form of the "Corn laws."

as grain, wine, woad, and the like was a source of particular delight. By the sale of these staples money was brought into the country. Agriculture should, therefore, be encouraged and developed. If more bullion could be secured by taxing exports, that was the proper policy to pursue.

Mines were also worthy of careful consideration. At first there was a widespread hope that the discovery of gold and silver deposits would enable France directly to increase her supply of the precious metals. As this desire gradually proved vain, it was replaced by a more modest program. If France developed her other mineral resources, of iron, lead, tin, copper, alum and the like, she would not have to buy these commodities from foreign countries. Thus indirectly she would be able to hoard more bullion. In the mines, furthermore, vagabonds and the unemployed of all sorts could be put to work.

Of all the means of developing a country, however, the most important to the mercantilist was the establishment of industries. No matter how well-endowed by nature a nation was, as long as it was dependent on other lands for its manufactured products it would remain poverty-stricken. France must make up her own raw materials and derive thereby the manufacturing profits. Nothing could be more ridiculous than to sell wool cheaply to the foreigner and buy back the cloth at infinitely higher prices. It was, of course, desirable to import raw products and work them up within the country, for thus increased returns would be secured. Through custom, manufactures had become necessities. The only way to avoid the export of bullion to pur-

chase them was to make them at home. But industries were difficult and expensive to establish. The king must, therefore, aid entrepreneurs by grants of privileges and of money, if need be, and by a proper organization of commerce. Industry free to seek its profits whither it listed was not contemplated. It must be so regulated as to achieve a *bon ordre*, and the quality of the output must be maintained by the government so that the sales abroad would not decrease.¹ Once numerous and prosperous industries were established the problem of the idle poor would be solved. They would work in producing manufactures.

One of the prime ways to aid in the establishment and support of industry was to encourage and regulate commerce. Not that commerce in itself was unworthy of attention, far from it. For a country without mines of gold and silver, the only way to obtain the precious metals was by the channels of trade. That commerce was a source of wealth and power was perfectly clear. In the early seventeenth century this belief was reinforced by the example of Holland. That little coun-

¹ In general the motives behind the desire for regulation by the government were not mercantilist in this period. As the authority of the cities and of the medieval guilds was gradually replaced during the fifteenth, sixteenth and seventeenth centuries by that of the central government, the duty of protecting the consumer likewise changed hands. It was to prevent the usual medieval abuses such as forestalling, regrating, monopoly, bad quality, short measure and the like that writers and assemblies urged governmental regulation. In repressing these evils the government sought chiefly the good of the individual purchaser. The only reasons for regulation mercantilist in flavor were those mentioned: a desire to see a smoothly and efficiently functioning industrial society, and a desire to hold foreign markets by keeping up quality. Before 1630 these last were for the most part merely minor considerations.

try, poor though it was in resources, was rapidly attaining opulence from its over-seas traffic. It was, perhaps, because of the object lesson offered by the Dutch that the idea became prevalent in France that the best way to organize commerce was to create great chartered and government-supported companies.

No more than industry was commerce to be left unrestricted. It must be diverted into the channels most profitable to France. In general there were two main desiderata. Bullion in the country should be increased by encouraging the inflow of it and checking the outflow; and industry must be fostered. Happily the means necessary to achieve these ends coincided. The most important regulation was to prohibit the importation of all manufactured goods. By so doing French industries would be aided, the idle employed and the export of gold and silver prevented. Similarly, although less emphasis was placed on this point, it would be desirable to encourage the importation of all raw materials suitable for manufacture.

Correlative to the regulation of imports was that of exports. Raw materials were not to be sent out of the country, so that French manufacturers would have on hand a plentiful supply at all times. Exports of manufactures, on the contrary, were to be stimulated, as foreigners would purchase them with coin. The export of certain staples like grain and wine was also countenanced, since foreign lands needed them and were willing to pay for them in money. To some it seemed advisable to tax staples as they went out of the realm, since thus the foreigner would have to buy them at higher prices. Whether such regulations would affect

adversely foreign lands was a matter of indifference to most mercantilist thinkers. Some, like the anonymous author of the *Advis au Roy etc.* took positive pleasure in the thought that France might thus impair the prosperity of other states.¹

For obtaining the proper raw products and for selling manufactured goods, it was realized, in the early seventeenth century, that colonies presented distinct advantages. From them could be obtained materials not produced in sufficient quantity in France and exotic wares not found at all at home. To them could be sold all sorts of commodities made in France. That colonies presented opportunities for missionary endeavor, and that possession of them would increase the power and prestige of the nation were further considerations not to be ignored.²

Neither the regulation of commerce nor the possession of colonies would, however, ensure French merchants in foreign lands a cordial reception. The limitations imposed by other states could easily and did actually hamper French commercial development. As a remedy it was early suggested that the central government exert its influence to secure proper conditions for merchants abroad. As a minimum it was felt that the Frenchman in other countries should receive as lenient treatment in his commercial pursuits as was meted out to the foreigner in France. On the high seas French vessels should be protected from outrages on the part of both foreigners and pirates.

¹ This attitude clearly foreshadows that of Colbert.

² The desire for colonies was not strong in France before 1630. Montchrétien is an outstanding exception to this generalization.

To defend French shipping a navy was necessary. A merchant marine was an asset worth guarding since it facilitated trade and kept at home freight and carriage charges that would otherwise enrich foreign ship-owners. That France with her ample supplies of wood, iron, hemp, linen, ports and sailors was not a great sea power was a disgrace. A large and efficient merchant fleet, watched over by a well-armed navy, would bring wealth to the country and spread the fame of the French to the four corners of the earth.

While the French planned thus to extend their commercial activities overseas, they wished to restrict the activities of foreigners in France. Most mercantilists felt that it was wise to welcome skilled foreign workers especially if they were masters of some new method. French apprentices could then be forced upon them and the process would become part of the country's industrial heritage. Foreign merchants should also receive moderately kind treatment especially if they came to buy French goods for export. But foreigners who came to carry on trade within the country, to open up banks, to lend money, to act as agents for individuals in their homelands, or to take part in any profitable government activity such as collecting taxes or even fighting should be severely restricted. That any foreigner should grow rich in France and then retire with his ill-gotten gains to his native country was more than a patriotic mercantilist could endure. To permit anything of that sort was to pauperize the state and to take bread from the mouths of the French wherewith to feed foreigners. There was a strong sentiment that it was natural and

just for Frenchmen alone to profit from the exploitation of France. There was likewise a feeling that foreigners were a bad lot, dishonest, corrupt and immoral, and that their presence in France could tend only to degrade the French, who were normally innocent, honorable and upright.¹

Such, briefly, were the mercantilist ideas and theories, centering in problems of self-sufficiency, commerce, industry and the like, which had become current in France by 1629. It might be asked pertinently at this point what are the criteria by which it is possible to decide whether a given theory is mercantilist. If mercantilism was only a loose aggregation of more or less related concepts, then it might well seem that any notion or belief having to do with economic life could be termed a part of mercantilism. Despite the lack of any close logical relation between various phases of mercantilist thought, there were certain unifying factors. Mercantilism dealt with the economic functioning of the national state, not of any smaller or larger unit. To Schmoller this was its distinguishing characteristic.² But there were others. Mercantilists had in mind one chief objective; they wished to make their state wealthy. To this all other considerations were subordinated. This aim sets off mercantilists from other schools of economic thought which have from time to time sought an analysis of existing conditions, the dis-

¹ There was, of course, the counter current of cosmopolitanism which made itself felt in works like those of Bodin, Sully and Crucé.

² G. Schmoller, *The Mercantile System*, p. 51 etc.

covery of a natural order, or the supremacy of a given class.¹

The desire to make a nation rich brought with it a new selfishness and a new abnegation of self. If the material interests of a given state were the sole concern, the good of all other countries must be ignored. Or going even further, it became natural to take pleasure in an injury done to a foreign area if, by that injury, the homeland was benefited. In this sense mercantilism ran directly counter to medieval cosmopolitanism. On the other hand, in its apotheosis of national interests, mercantilism demanded the sacrifice of local interests. The advantages of an individual, of a locality or of a city could receive little attention if they were not in accord with the general needs of the nation. Thus mercantilism was the antithesis of localism. It was of course held, however, that in general local and national requirements would coincide. What was good for the land as a whole would be likewise good for most of its component parts.

A condition in which there could be a philosophic neglect of the welfare of other countries and a somewhat more practical disregard of local interests presupposes a long development. People must have been brought to believe that the well-being and prosperity of the nation are paramount economic necessities. They must have been taught to think in national terms and have been made very conscious of boundaries, to have

¹ Mercantilism was in essence bourgeois and that class was the one most benefited by the application of its tenets. But among the early mercantilists in France, at least, there was little class consciousness.

it seem quite natural to them that harm done to a man on one side of a line, and benefit to a man on the other side should both be occasions for rejoicing even though they have no personal interest in either case. As long as commerce and industry were conceived as local or individual concerns mercantilism was impossible, for it demanded that imports, exports, shipping and manufacturing be thought of as carried on by the nation as a whole. For a man in Rouen to take pride in the wine exports of Bordeaux meant that he must believe that his own welfare was not only intimately associated but even identical with that of his fellow citizens. In general terms, for mercantilism to become current it was necessary for people to have achieved a sense of nationhood in the economic sphere.

A mere realization of national solidarity was not enough to produce serious thought or action unless to it was added an emotional drive. This was to be found in national patriotism. If a man came to love his country with a profound and abiding affection welling up from deep within his being, an affection that surpassed all interest in foreign lands, and all fondness for any locality or town, then he was supplied with a motive which would make him work gladly for the economic betterment of his fatherland. All mercantilism was infused with and colored by national patriotism. Most of it was likewise tinged with the usual though not essential negative corollary of love for country, a dislike of foreigners, ranging from indifference to bitter, burning hatred.

The sense of nationhood and the patriotism requisite for mercantilism probably were not in France developed

from economic pre-occupations. They seem to have arisen in connection with the prolonged national struggle against the English, the Hundred Years' War, and to have centered in the first place in enthusiasm for national heroes like Jeanne d'Arc and in personal loyalty to the kings. But once a feeling of national solidarity and patriotism began to interact with economic interest and thought, both sides were immensely intensified and changed by the conjunction. To have told Abelard that a war with the Dutch was necessary because they were selling their manufactures in France, and because they were carrying French goods on the sea would have caused him considerable amusement. Yet by the seventeenth century such a stand seemed natural and right to many intelligent men. Such a change was made possible by the increasing identification of economic life with national politics and with patriotic interests. From one point of view mercantilism was the economic phase of nascent nationalism, and it was in part on the economic solidarity fostered by mercantilism that nationalism was to build in the future.

No less important than the rise of patriotism and the sense of a national community of interests was the growth of *étatisme* in France. On the practical side *étatisme* meant the extension of royal authority as against the feudal rule of the nobles and the power of the provinces, cities, church and guilds. Such an extension was for the most part supported by the bourgeoisie, since by it they gained protection against local exactions and arbitrary control. On the theoretical side *étatisme* meant the belief in the absolute sovereignty

of the royal government, its complete power to act unhampered by the interference of other bodies, its right to legislate on all subjects, its irresponsibility to all authorities save God. Mercantilism represented the economic counterpart of political *étatisme*.¹ In practice it sought to bring all phases of economic life under royal control. It turned to the king for aid, support, regulations, legislation. In theory mercantilists were almost pathetic in their childlike belief in the omnipotence and omnicompetence of the central government. Was anything wrong, the king should and could remedy it. Did an abuse exist, the king could annihilate it by an edict. Was an undertaking desirable, the king could initiate it and make it a success.

Based upon and interacting with nascent nationalism, *étatisme* and patriotism, mercantilism grew up in France in the hundred and seventy-five years following the close of the struggle with England. It was not the work of any individual or group. It developed rather as the situation and condition of the country turned men's minds to new thoughts which found expression in writings, meetings and laws. By 1629 mercantilist ideas had become widespread, and were treated as the natural and correct solution for the problem of how to make a nation wealthy. They had been formed into a pervasive premise on which to reason and to act. The very strength of mercantilism lay in the tacit acceptance of it by great numbers and by great men. Neither Richelieu nor Colbert were economic theorists, yet they wrote and acted along the theoretical lines laid down by the host of earlier figures who had made mercantilism an integral part of French thought.

¹ As Gallicanism was its counterpart in religion.

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— *Les discours d'une liberté générale et vie heureuse pour le bien du peuple;* (Paris, 1601).

— *Discours sur la figure du Roy eslevée à la porte de la maison de ville;* (2nd edition, Paris, 1607).

— * *La façon de faire et semer la graine des meuriers, les eslever en pépinières, et les replanter aux champs: gouverner et nourrir les vers à soye au climat de la France, plus facilement que par les mémoires de tous ceux qui ont escript;* (Paris, 1604). Also in, *Mémoires et documents sur la sériculture*; (Montpellier, 1877).

— *L'incredulité ou l'ignorance de ceux qui ne veulent cognoistre le bien & repos de l'estat & veoir renaistre la vie heureuse des Français;* (Paris, 1600).

This work includes six pamphlets published separately in the same year, and also issued in various combinations. The titles of the pamphlets are:

Premier traicté ou est remontré le mal que font les foires franches en ce royaume et comme ce royaume

* The star indicates that the work was used in this form.

se rend tributaire de celui d'Angleterre à cause de leurs manufactures.

Second traicté, advertisement et responce aux marchands & autres ou il est touché des changes, banquiers & banquieroutiers.

Troisième traicté, les moyens de chasser la gueuserye, contraindre les faineants & employer les pauvres. Desdiez à Messieurs du clergé.

Le quatriesme advertisement du commerce fait sur le debvoir de l'aumosne des pauvres, dédié aux riches & amateurs du bien public.

Le cinqiesme traicté du commerce parlant des procez & chiquanerries, & voir l'honneur que l'on doit porter aux juges de la justice, avec la faute & la création de celle des consuls, & autre telles préjudiciables au public.

Le sixiesme traicté du commerce, sur l'abus de la cherté des vivres & denrées: parlant d'aucuns Maires & Eschevins, Fermiers tant du vin que du sel, douanes, gabelles, & voyers des villes.

— *Lettres et exemples de la feu royne mère, comme elle faisoit travailler aux manufactures, et fournissoit aux ouvriers de ses propres deniers. Avec la preuve certaine de faire les soyes en ce royaume: pour la provision d'iceluy, et en peu d'années, en fournir aux estrangers; (Paris, 1602).* *Also in, *Archives curieuses de l'histoire de France*, Sér. I, Vol. IX, pp. 121-136.

— *Le mérite du travail et labeur dédié aux chefs de la police; (Paris, 1602).*

— *Le naturel et profit admirable du meurier; (Paris, 1604).*

— *Neuf advertisements pour servir a l'utilité publique advenus sur le bonheur de la naissance de Monseigneur le Dauphin. Assavoir est d'un bon et rare ouvrier françois: faire fil d'or au tiltre de Milan; faire croistre le ris en France, bluter les farines par des enfans; faire fromage à la vraye mode de Milan; faire croistre esperges grosses de*

* The star indicates that the work was used in this form.

deux poulces et longues d'un grand pied; comme les estrangers possèdent la navigation de la mer et les richesses des foires; certain avis de fabriquer toutes étoffes en France; etc.; (Paris, 1601).

— *Le plaisir de la noblesse et autres qui ont des éritudes aux champs, sur la preuve certaine et profit des estouffes et soyes qui se font à Paris, & les magazins qui seront aux provinces etc.;* (Paris, 1603).

— *Preuve du plant et profit des meuriers pour les paroisses des généralitez de Paris, Orléans, Tours et Lyon pour l'année 1603;* (Paris, 1603).

— *Recueil présenté au Roy de ce qui se passe en l'assemblée du commerce au palais à Paris;* (Paris, 1604). *Also in, *Archives curieuses de l'histoire de France*, Sér. I, Vol. XIV, pp. 219-245. Also in, *Documents inédits sur l'histoire de France, mélanges historiques* (ed. by M. Champollion-Figeac), Vol. IV, pp. 284-301.

— *Reiglement général pour dresser les manufactures et ouvrages en ce royaume et couper le cours des draps de soye et autres marchandises qui perdent et ruynent l'état;* (Rouen, 1597).

— *Reiglement général pour dresser les manufactures en ce royaume et couper le cours des draps de soye et autres marchandises qui perdent et ruynent l'état. Avec l'extract de l'avis qui MM. de l'assemblée tenue à Rouen ont baillé à S. M. que l'entrée de toutes sortes de . . . marchandises de soyes et laines manufacturées hors ce royaume soient defendues en iceluy. . . Ensemble le moyen de faire les soyes par toute la France;* (Paris, 1597).

(Note: this is a reprint of the preceding work with the addition of a supplement of fourteen pages, numbered separately, at the end.)

— *Remonstrance au peuple suivant les édits et ordonnances des roys, à cause du luxe et superfluité des soyes, clinquants en habits, ruine générale;* (Paris, 1601).

* Star indicates that the work was used in this form.

— *Remonstrances politiques sur l'abus des charlatans, pipeurs et enchantereurs*; (Paris, 1601).

— *Responce à Messieurs de Lyon, lesquels veulent empescher rompre le cours des marchandises d'Italie, avec le préjudice de leurs foires, et l'abus aux changes*; (Paris, 1597).

— *La ruine et disette d'argent commune aujourd'huy par toute la France par les désordres et les injustices de la guerre*; (Paris, 1652).

(Note: The date is given on the title page as MDCLII, this is probably a misprint for MDCIII or possibly for MDXCIII or some such date.)

— *La ruine et disette d'argent qu'ont apporté les draps de soyes en France, avec des raisons que n'ont jamais cogneu les françois pour y remedier*; (Paris, 1608).

— *Source de plusieurs abus et monopoles qui se sont glissez et coulez sur le peuple de France, depuis trente ans ou environ, à la ruine de l'estat, dont il se trouve moyen par un reglement général d'empescher à l'advenir tel abus*; (Paris, 1596).

— *Le tesmoignage certain du profit [sic] et revenu des soyes de France, par preuves certifieés du pais de Langue-doc*; (Paris, 1602).

— *Les trésors et richesses pour mettre l'estat en splendeur et monstrer au vray la ruine des françois par le trafic et négoco de estrangers: et empescher facilement les petits procez en toute vacation; voir comme la justice des consuls doit etre supprimée, et autres belles raisons. Le tout pour le bien de ce royaume*; (Paris, 1598).

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